

Seven condemned to death in Algeria for bishop's 1996 murder

ALGIERS (AFP) — An Algerian court on Monday condemned seven Islamists to death for the 1996 murder of Bishop Pierre Claverie, who was killed with his driver Mohamed Bouchikhi when a bomb exploded in the bishop's palace of Oran on Aug. 1, 1996. Claverie was returning home after a meeting with the then French Foreign Minister Hervé de Charette, who was visiting Algeria.

An eighth defendant in the case was sentenced to three years in prison, another was given a two-year suspended jail term, while two others were acquitted.

A 12th defendant, who had been on the run, gave himself up while the trial was in progress, a local journalist said.

The prosecutor had asked only for four death sentences for the murder of Bishop Pierre Claverie, who was killed with his driver Mohamed Bouchikhi when a bomb exploded in the bishop's palace of Oran on Aug. 1, 1996. Claverie was returning home after a meeting with the then French Foreign Minister Hervé de Charette, who was visiting Algeria.

Authorities said the three who actually committed the

murder, allegedly members of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), were killed by security forces several months later.

The defendants at the trial which began Sunday were accused of belonging to a terrorist group and taking part in an ambush and premeditated murder. They had allegedly acted as a support group for the hit-squad, providing shelter, transport and reconnaissance.

The local journalist said several of the accused

claimed that their confessions had been tortured out of them.

Those sentenced to death were only partially identified, being named as Kaddour A. Mohammad O., Ahmad K. Benyahia A., Abdelkrim B. Houari L.B. and Ahmad S.

The killing of Claverie was said to have been ordered by the GIA's leader for western Algeria, Mustapha Akkili, 28, who has a price of some \$65,000 on his head.

U.N. agency warns against food, water shortages in Middle East

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Poor Middle East countries are being hit hard by a combination of soaring food costs and tumbling export revenue, the head of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) said here Tuesday.

"The high cost of food imports combined with the loss of income from commodity exports as a result of falling prices and increasing debt burden, have caused serious problems for many low-income food-deficit countries," said FAO Director General Jacques Diouf.

This has "slowed the progress toward the achievement of food security," he added in his speech at the opening of the 24th FAO Middle East conference.

Mr. Diouf said that despite the oil-for-food programme which allows Iraq to sell limited amounts of crude oil in order to buy food and medical supplies, "malnutrition remains a serious concern" there.

The Middle East is largely dependent on food imports,

which will increase by 71 per cent in the next 12 years. These imports will rise to 75.5 million tonnes in 2010 compared to 44 million tonnes in 1988-90, according to FAO figures.

Sixteen per cent of people in the Middle East, or 74 million people, suffer from malnutrition, Djibouti, Egypt, Kazakhstan, Mauritania, Morocco, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Yemen are in the weakest position food-wise, according to an FAO report.

Mr. Diouf reminded agriculture ministers and representatives from 29 Middle East countries that one goal of the 1996 FAO world summit in Rome, signed by 186 countries, was "to at least cut by half the number of today's 800 million chronically hungry people in the world, by the year 2015."

Promoting investment in agriculture is one of the FAO's objectives, he added.

In 1995-97, the FAO drew up \$756 million in invest-

ment projects, of which 370 million would be financed by other organisations. In 1996-97, 64 new agriculture and rural projects were implemented in the Middle East. The region is also plagued by a shortage of water.

In 2025, there will be less than 700 cubic metres of renewable water per person compared to 4,780 cubic metres per person in other parts of the world, he said.

He said, "The high variation of rainfall subjects many areas of the region to great risks and insecure food production."

Ten Middle Eastern countries use more than 100 per cent of their renewable water resources, and water quality is a problem in 10 other countries in the area.

Mr. Diouf did not identify the countries in question but called for "efficient use of water."

"Many common and technical problems faced by individual countries of the region could better be solved by joining efforts," he said.

Nine hurt in clashes at Istanbul University

ISTANBUL (AFP) — Nine people were injured when police intervened to try to stop clashes between rightist and leftist students at Istanbul University on Tuesday, the Anatolia news agency reported.

The factions were battling with sticks and stones. Police rushed in when Molotov cocktails were thrown through the windows of the economics faculty and separated the groups.

The clashes erupted again when leftists tried to drag a right-wing student from the ambulance in which he was being taken to hospital, Anatolia said.

Seven students and two policemen were hurt.

Clashes on Turkish campuses have been on the rise for several months.

Student unrest and factional battling reached peak levels in Turkey in the late 1970s and were cited by the military as being among its reasons for staging a coup in 1980.



POLICE ESCORT FOR KOFI: Palestinian police Tuesday escort U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan's car during his visit to the Jabalia Refugee Camp, near Gaza City. Mr. Annan cut his visit to the camp short after being mobbed by desperate residents demanding help (AFP photo)

Military equipment expo opens next month

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A two-day exhibition of military equipment from more than 35 countries will be held here next month, a spokesman for the organising committee said Tuesday.

Colonel Meteb Daboubi, a spokesman for Jordan's Special Operation Command (SOC), said the fair, the second in less than two years, will focus on the weapons used by special forces, paratroopers, rapid deployment forces and security forces.

He said the fair, which will open on April 28, will be organised by the London-based Contingent and Operational Procurement Exhibition (COPEX).

HRH Prince Abdullah, SOC chief, had extended an invitation to COPEX to organise the exhibition in the Kingdom.

"There are no political objectives behind the fair. It is

merely to inform the participants on the activities and defence equipment to enforce security and peace," he told the Jordan Times.

The Israeli government will not be participating in the event, but several Israeli firms are expected to attend, said Col. Daboubi. "The exhibition is open for all visitors from all over the world without exception," he added.

Col. Daboubi said that among the countries that will take part in the fair are the United States, Britain, Germany, Russia, France, Romania and other European states.

He said participants will exhibit small arms and light artillery, helicopters, night vision equipment, land and navigation systems, field support weapons, radar and communications systems.

Col. Daboubi emphasised that the fair will coincide with the 35th anniversary of the Jordanian Special Forces, and "live demonstrations and airshows will be held during the

two-day function."

He said that more than 50 non-Jordanian firms are expected to take part in the exhibition, as well as at least 20 local firms.

He said the SOC has made plans to contact concerned Jordanian companies to "ensure the maximum participation from local firms."

Col. Daboubi said local firms are expected to show supplies, computer systems, and other items.

He said that contrary to the previous exhibition, where entry was confined to participants and invitees, the 1998 fair, which is held at the King Abdullah Military Air Base, is open to all citizens.

In 1996, several firms representing the Israeli military industry took part in the exhibition, which included several American, Canadian and European weapons firms.

It also drew visitors from Europe, the Far East, Africa, North and South America and Australia.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Israelis arrest two Palestinians suspected of killing settler

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israeli police said Tuesday they had arrested two Palestinians suspected of killing a right-wing Jewish settler and wounding another last November. The two students of a religious college run by the extreme nationalist Ateret Cohanim came under automatic weapon fire in the old part of Jerusalem. Police said the two Palestinians from Abu Dis, a West Bank town adjoining Arab east Jerusalem, planned to attack other Jewish settlers living in the Molsme district of the Old City.

12,000 Palestinians allowed to make Christian pilgrimage

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — The Israeli military authorities will give 12,000 West Bank and Gaza Strip residents visas to go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem and Nazareth for the Annunciation feast, a military spokesman said Tuesday. "The defence ministry and General Yaacov Ori, the coordinator of Israeli activities in the territories, decided to provide the required visas to married persons aged 25 and over and to minors," spokesman Shlomo Dror said.

Iranian foreign minister to visit Syria, Lebanon

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi will visit Syria and Lebanon soon with messages from President Mohammad Khatami, the official IRNA news agency said Tuesday. Mr. Kharazi will spend March 28 and 29 in Damascus where he will meet Syrian President Hafez Al Assad. Vice President Abdul Halim Khaddam and Foreign Minister Farouk Sharaa. They will discuss problems in the Muslim World and the Middle East. IRNA said. The news agency did not give the dates of Mr. Kharazi's visit to Beirut or the names of those whom he will meet there. However, Iranian diplomats in Damascus said Mr. Kharazi was expected in Lebanon Sunday.

Somali warlords pledge to restore peace in country

CAIRO (AFP) — Two Somali warlords on Tuesday pledged their determination to restore stability in their country, in line with a peace agreement struck in Egypt in December.

Hussein Mohammad Aided and Ali Mahdi Muhammad, in a message to the Arab League, also appealed for urgent financial assistance which they said was needed to convene a national Somali reconciliation conference.

"The Somali factions are preparing to convene the reconciliation conference on March 31 in Baidoa," Mr. Aided and Mr. Ali Mahdi said in a written statement to the meeting in Cairo of Arab foreign ministers.

"It is this conference is delayed it will be because of

the lack of necessary funds to finance the conference and not for political reasons," the statement said.

Somali factions say they need \$4.5 million to convene the Baidoa conference.

Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdul Meguid meanwhile urged the foreign ministers to provide Somalia with the necessary assistance.

The Arab League has so far received \$400,000 from Qatar and \$100,000 from Kuwait for Somalia, officials said.

On Monday, Somali faction leader Ibrahim Dirie warned that the Baidoa conference would not take place on March 31, stressing, however, that the committee entrusted with preparing the forum would pursue its work.

The Egyptian foreign ministry, meanwhile, said it had

Four killed as Somali gunmen fight over food in Mogadishu

MOGADISHU (AFP) — At least four people were killed and seven others wounded when gunmen fought over the distribution of food aid in south Mogadishu on Tuesday, witnesses said.

The victims included two people who attempted to loot the food, donated by Saudi Arabia to help people affected by devastating floods in Somalia late in 1997 and early this year.

One of the guards escorting the trucks carrying the food and a civilian were also killed in the shootout.

He urged all the Somali factions to respect the terms of the peace accord they reached in Cairo in December, which called for the formation of a government.

Somalia has had no legal government since the overthrow of the dictator Mohammad Siad Barre in January 1991.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

16:10Mr. Bogus Show
16:30French Programmes
18:00Oliver Twist
18:30Drama — Neighbours
19:00The Journal
19:15Science Magazine — E-Me
19:30News headlines
19:35Comedy — Campus Cop
20:00Dix — The Health Show
20:30Timewatch
21:10Drama — Kung Fu
22:00News in English
22:30It (Prone of Two)
23:59Country Music
00:30End of T.V.

PRAYER TIMES

04:12Fajr
05:30Sunrise/Duha
11:42Dhuhr
15:11Asr
17:54Maghreb
19:11Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swedif, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4624785
St. Joseph Church Tel.
4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel.
4622366
Anglican Church Tel.
4624853/4624811.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 771751.

Amman International Church
Tel. 865897
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 568824
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter
Day Saints Tel. 4654952
St. John the Baptist at De la
Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel.
4623521
Church of Presentation, Swedif
Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church
Tel. 4624757
The English-Language
Catholic Parish Tel. 4614191
Evangelical Free Church Tel.
892679
The Baptist Church Tel.
4628052
The Armenian Catholic
Church 771331

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the
Department of Meteorology
Temperatures are expected to
rise, skies partly cloudy to
sunny, and winds easterly
moderate. In Aqaba, winds
will be northerly moderate and

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Dr. Khalil Tiedou757253
Dr. Nasser Ibrahim570432
Dr. Wafiq Qaddumi83352
Dr. Bahjat Bader75012
Firas pharmacy5661912
Ferdows pharmacy890204
Al Asema pharmacy4637055
Al Salam pharmacy4636739
Yacoub pharmacy4624945
Shmeisani pharmacy4637690
Nairoukh pharmacy4623672
Najih pharmacy547632
IRBID:
Dr. Ghazi Ta'amneh250080
Al Quds pharmacy4624945
ZARQA:
Dr. Tareq Hijawi985442
Khalifeh pharmacy985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre4637111
Civil Defence Department5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Res-
ponse4636341
Civil Defence Emergency199
Rescue Police4621111/4637777
Fire Brigade4637101
Blood Bank755121
Highway Police843402
Traffic Police896390
Public Security Dept.4630321
Hotel Complaints5605800
Police Complaints5661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints897467
Amman Municipality Com-
plaints787111
Telephone Information (directo-
ry assistance)121
Overseas Calls010230
Central Amman Telephone
Repairs4623101
Amman Tel. Repairs5661101
Jordan Television773111
Radio Jordan774111
Water Authority5680100
J. Electricity Authority815615
Electric Power Co.4636381
RJ Flight Information44-
55200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport44-55200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Spec-
ial Surgery5921199

THE ISLAMIC, ABDI

Husein Medical Centre Tel.
836813, 856856
Luzula4630195
Khalid Maternity4644281/6
Akileh Maternity4624412
Jabal Amman Maternity
462362
Mulhas, J. Amman4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani5607071
Shmeisani Hospital5669131
University Hospital845845
Al-Muasher Hospital5667227
Al-Ahli, Abdali5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen77101/3
Al-Bashir775111/26
Army, Marka891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital5602240/50
Amal Hospital5674155

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital
07:25Damascus (RJ)
08:05Larnaca (RJ)
08:35Jeddah (RJ)
08:50Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
15:00New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
16:50Istanbul (RJ)
17:45Brussels, Geneva (RJ)
18:10Rome (RJ)
18:10Madrid, Frankfurt (RJ)
18:10London, Berlin (RJ)
18:20Paris, Vienna (RJ)
23:10Beirut (RJ)
08:05Cairo (RJ)
01:59Jeddah (add) (RJ)

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital
02:2755555
Greek Catholic Hospital
02:277275
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital
02:277100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA
INTERNATIONAL
AIRPORT
This information is supplied
by Royal Jordanian (RJ) infor-
mation department at the
Queen Alia International Air-
port Tel. (44)53200 where it
should always be verified.
Information on other flights
are supplied on phone 44
(52700) or 44(53280).

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ)
Flights
07:25Damascus (RJ)
08:05Larnaca (RJ)
08:35Jeddah (RJ)
08:50Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
15:00New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
16:50Istanbul (RJ)
17:45Brussels, Geneva (RJ)
18:10Rome (RJ)
18:10Madrid, Frankfurt (RJ)
18:10London, Berlin (RJ)
18:20Paris, Vienna (RJ)
23:10Beirut (RJ)
08:05Cairo (RJ)
01:59Jeddah (add) (RJ)

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09:30Cairo (MS)
10:15Doha, Al Hudaydah (YV)
10:30Jeddah (SV)
10:50Kuwait (KU)
13:10Tunis (TU)
13:25Doha, Abu Dhabi (GF)
13:45Khartoum (add) (RJ)
13:50Tel Aviv (LY)
15:05Vienna (OS)
15:30Algiers (AH)
16:05Karachi, Abu Dhabi (PK)
20:10Beirut (ME)
21:10Paris, Damascus (AF)
22:30Athens (OA)
23:15London (BA)
23:30London, Beirut (BA)
23:35Amsterdam (KL)

DEPARTURES

07:45Aqaba (RW)
09:05Amman (QAIA) (RW)
09:50Amman (Marka Air-
port) (RW)
17:20Tel Aviv (RW)
18:30Amman (QAIA) (RW)
21:20Aqaba (RW)
22:50Amman (Marka Air-
port) (RW)
08:25Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
09:45Rome (RJ)
10:40Berlin, London (RJ)
11:00Istanbul (RJ)
19:30Colombo (RJ)
19:35Beirut (RJ)
20:05Riyadh, Dhahran (RJ)

Other Flights

00:35Amsterdam (KL)
01:55Bucharest (RO)
06:35Larnaca (CY)
08:00Beirut (ME)
08:25London (BA)
10:30Cairo (MS)
11:15Al Hudaydah, Aden (YV)
12:00Kuwait (KU)
12:00Jeddah (SV)
14:10Tunis (TU)
14:20Sharjah (AH)
15:15Bahrain, Muscat (GF)
15:10Tel Aviv (LY)
15:30Doha (QR)
15:50Vienna (OS)
19:30Abu Dhabi, Karachi (PK)
23:55Damascus, Paris (AF)

Royal Wings (RW)

06:45Amman (Marka Air-
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08:15Aqaba (RW)
09:30Amman (QAIA) (RW)
16:45Amman (Marka Air-
port) (RW)
17:55Tel Aviv (RW)
20:30Amman (QAIA) (RW)
21:50Aqaba (RW)

Home M
Charges
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Charges dropped against mother accused of burning children

By Alia Shukri Hamzeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A case against a 27-year-old mother who allegedly tortured her three children was dismissed Tuesday after their father dropped the charges and forced his sons to change their statements, an official said.

The father, who remained several months ago, apparently forced the boys to deny that their mother tried to burn them with a heated knife because he feared the court might grant him custody of the children, the official said.

Together with two other siblings, the three boys, who sustained burns on their faces and other parts of their bodies, live with their mother.

Police arrested the mother Monday after the children's school took the youngsters to a family protection centre at the Shmeisani police station and showed officers the burns inflicted on the boys, aged between five and nine, the official said.

The school filed a complaint against the mother, he added.

"The coroner examined the three children and stated that the eldest son suffered from burns on the upper lip and right wrist, while the second son, seven, had burns on the face and the right arm. The third son, five, suffered from burns on the face and the palm of his right hand," he said.

The official said the mother first denied she had hurt the children but later said she wanted to harm them to take revenge on her husband for his recent marriage.

"Later, she changed her statement," he told the Jordan Times.

The mother was later released.

"We will pursue the matter with the school administration, and the Ministry of Social Development to make sure that this does not happen again," the official added.



HRH Princess Basma and Ms. Farah Daghestani attend a workshop Tuesday focusing on setting priority areas for women's research in Jordan (Photo by Yousef Allan)

Princess Basma attends workshop on prioritising women's research

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Princess Basma attended a workshop Tuesday on determining the priorities for research on Jordanian women.

The workshop, organised by the Princess Basma Women's Resource Centre (PBWRC), focused attention on a proposal to begin a new research programme on Jordanian women's affairs.

The workshop focused on four main themes: reproductive health, social, economic and environmental situation, decision-making, and political participation

and legislation.

During her opening remarks, Ms. Farah Daghestani reviewed the PBWRC's plans in research and studies. She stated that the workshop seeks to determine the most pressing priorities for women in light of recent developments and socio-economic changes.

She said the centre has been conducting research on involvement by Jordanian women in the labour market, their contributions to development projects, and the reasons behind the withdrawal of some

women from such participation.

She said the studies on reproductive health, as well as family planning, focused on the social and economic factors and their impact on fertility rates.

According to Ms. Farah Daghestani, the centre has also conducted studies on women in rural regions and recommended that an assessment be made of the income-generating projects in rural areas.

Participants at the meeting reviewed current research and plans for new studies.

Pharmacists' union to seek clarification on members' voting eligibility

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan Pharmacists Association President Abdul Rahim Issa Tuesday said the association's former board will approach the legal committee at the Prime Ministry today to determine which members of the 4,000-strong union would be eligible to vote in new association elections.

The pharmacists' association board was dissolved earlier this month in a High Court of Justice decision that rendered last April's general assembly elections null and void.

In the elections, the general assembly voted for a president and a nine-member board, heavily dominated by Islamists. Five general assembly members challenged the "legality" of the election results, saying that some votes were invalid because members had not paid their association dues — a requirement for voting.

"We will abide by the court's decision. The question now is whether or not we will be considering the votes of the paid-up members in 1997 or the

votes of the paid-up members in 1998, and we are asking the legal committee to determine what will be the proper procedure," said Dr. Issa.

The court decision showed that 177 members who voted in the April 1997 elections paid their membership fees with postdated cheques while 52 others submitted cheques that bounced.

Minister of Health and Medical Care Ashraf Kurdi has called on the previous board to run the association's day to day affairs and organise new elections.

Members of the dissolved board have already expressed an interest in running in the upcoming elections, which, according to Dr. Issa, will be held in May.

Dr. Issa said that the board was "generally disappointed" with the court's verdict. "None of our associations' boards have ever been dissolved for this reason, although it is highly likely that there were many who had not paid or had not paid in full on the day of the elections," he said.

He declined to comment on whether or not the decision by the five members who pursued the issue at the High Court was a political one.

"The fact of the matter is that this is a decision that we must honour," he said. "It doesn't matter what I or anyone else thinks."

This is the second time in three years that general assembly members of a professional association have contested the legality of an association's elections. In 1995, the Jordan Bar Association's elections were contested by then-Minister of Justice Hisham Al Tal and defeated presidential candidate Khalaf Massad'eh.

Prior to the elections, the justice minister forbade the participation of West Bank members, leading to a tug of war between the bar and the ministry. The ministry nullified the ballots of the West Bank members while the bar association included them in the tally. The case was dropped when the president of the bar, Kamal Nassar, was appointed to a ministerial post.

TB incidence rate one of lowest in region — Kurdi

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Health and Medical Care Ashraf Kurdi on Tuesday said the 1997 incidence rate of tuberculosis in Jordan was nine cases per 100,000 people, one of the lowest rates in the eastern Mediterranean region.

In a statement issued on the occasion of World

Tuberculosis Day, Dr. Kurdi said the ministry has adopted the goal of eliminating tuberculosis by the year 2010, and has therefore implemented a short-term strategy to deal with the cases discovered in Jordan.

Jordan has had a programme for the control of tuberculosis in place since

the 1950s, he added.

Dr. Kurdi said the disease kills three million people a year and debilitates another nine million.

Although the disease disappeared for a long time, it has made a comeback due to many factors, including the spread of AIDS and transmission patterns, Dr. Kurdi said.

Concerted development efforts needed to overcome water shortage — Majali

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali on Tuesday said concerted public and private sector efforts are needed to overcome Jordan's lack of water and energy resources in the course of the country's development.

In an address delivered on his behalf by Minister of Water and Irrigation Munther Haddadin at a ceremony in observance of World Water Day, Dr. Majali said the government is working in conjunction with the private sector to prepare a five-year socio-economic plan that will include development plans and explanations of the government's policies in this regard.

"The cost of water in

advanced nations does not rise above one per cent of the national income, but in Jordan it is around six per cent, equally shared by the state treasury and the public," according to the prime minister's address.

The high cost of water is attributed to the imbalance between population and resources, the poor geographic distribution of population, and ineffective water networks and water resources management, as well as the high cost of energy needed for water supply operations, he said.

"We do not see any hope of reducing the cost of water, since the facts are clear to us. We are certain that the cost of water will be even higher in the years ahead and we are facing

major challenges in this respect.

"There is need to increase the economic growth rates and the national income, improve the quality of the water networks and prepare a clear water strategy," Dr. Majali said.

Ministry of Water and Irrigation Secretary General Qusay Quteishat told the audience that the population growth rate in Jordan, which stands at 3.6 per cent annually, is placing pressure on water resources, as are factors such as forced immigration, improvement in living conditions and urban development.

The ministry has developed policies for managing underground water

resources, 75 per cent of which is used for drinking, and drawn up plans for the use of surface and stored rain water for irrigation, according to Mr. Quteishat. He noted that the ministry plans to spend some \$780 million in the coming five years on developing these resources.

The meeting was organised by the Ministry of Water and Irrigation in conjunction with the Jordan Environment Society and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

After the opening session, Dr. Haddadin honoured Jordanian organisations that have contributed to a programme for raising public awareness on the need to economise on water consumption.

International theatre festival starts today

By Omar Karmi
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Amman International Theatre Festival for Independent Groups will start today at the Royal Cultural Centre (RCC).

The festival is scheduled to kick off at 5:00 p.m. with a festival parade, which will lead an estimated 250 participants from Sports City Circle to the RCC, where a reception will be held at 6:00 p.m.

The festival's two opening plays both hail from Jordanian groups. At 7:00 p.m. at the Studio stage, the first play, written, directed and performed by Jordanian Ghada Saba, "As If..." will start, and Sawson Darwaseh's "Three Boxes Memory" will begin at the main stage at 8:30 p.m.

Although both plays will be performed in Arabic, there is a simultaneous translation service available in the main hall. This service is available for all the plays performed here throughout the duration of the festival.

During the two-week festival, 18 plays from around the world will be performed. Participants come from all over the Arab World as well as Sweden, France, India and Indonesia. Performances will take place at the RCC and Al Mashini Theatre in Amman, and Al Sharq Theatre at Yarmouk University in Irbid.

Apart from the actual performances, there will also be a number of workshops covering various aspects of theatre production and performance. Programmes are available from the organisers, as are bilingual (Arabic and English) newsletters that will be published throughout the duration of the festival.

Ensour meets with Japanese consultative delegation

AMMAN (Petra) — Acting Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour conferred Tuesday with a Japanese consultative delegation of industry experts entrusted with conducting studies on developing policies for Jordan's industry.

Discussion centred among other things on providing the delegation members with the necessary facilities to ensure success in laying down a national industrial strategy.

Expressing satisfaction with the Kingdom's relations with Japan, Dr. Ensour said Jordan was grateful for Japan's economic support.

The acting prime minister expressed the government's readiness to continue offering the necessary facilities to the delegation's members, saying that their endeavours are designed not only to develop Jordan's industry, but also to create jobs for the unemployed.

Also Tuesday, Dr. Ensour chaired a regular Cabinet meeting, during which approval was given to the exchange of memoranda between the Jordanian and Japanese governments concerning Japan's \$6.6 million grant for medical equipment for government hospitals.

Japan is offering this grant under its foreign aid programme, according to a Cabinet statement. Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf has been authorised to sign the memoranda on behalf of the government.

The Council of Ministers approved the exchange of memoranda with the British government for a three-year grant of JD501,500 ending in the year 2000. Dr. Khalaf was authorised to sign the agreement.

At the meeting, a tenders committee was formed to select contractors to build facilities for the 1999 Pan-Arab Games.

The Cabinet consented to

Jordan hosting the 57th meeting of a Pan-Arab committee supervising educational programmes beamed via radio and television to persons in the occupied Arab territories.

The meeting will be held from May 8-15, according to the statement, which said the director of the Department of Palestinian Affairs, Ibrahim Badran, will head the Jordanian delegation.

The Cabinet approved Jordan's participation in the 14th executive council meeting of the Arab Centre for Studies in Dry Lands in Damascus on March 28.

It also approved the formation of a delegation led by Minister of Health and Medical Care Ashraf Kurdi to attend the 51st session of the Arab Health Ministers Council in Geneva in May and a delegation to visit Yemen early next month to discuss civil aviation issues of concern to the two countries.

Local businesses taking interactive commercial services to Internet

By Ahmed Naser
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan's e-commerce has taken the first step in becoming more interactive after a trading establishment and a hair stylist recently decided to market their services through a local Bulletin Board Service (BBS) and the World Wide Web.

Wholesalers can now surf Petra Trading and Industrial Group's (PTIG) on-line catalogue and order door-to-door deliveries by fax, while Hammodeh Salon receives bookings from women via e-mail.

"People are more used to [dealing with] paper," said Naim Nassar, one of PTIG's owners. "If we get a decent turnout [in the future], we will make an on-line electronic form available," he added, alluding that order-

ing via e-mail may become a reality within a month.

PTIG's marketing savvy is aimed at giving Jordanians a friendlier, more interactive Web experience. Mr. Nassar told the Jordan Times.

"Instead of just viewing text and pictures," PTIG is offering "freebies" to the first 50 visitors who correctly answer a quiz on the company, the first Jordanian firm to do so, he added.

"Answers are there on the [Internet] site," said Mr. Nassar. "This will encourage people to surf the site."

In the future, more such competitions will be available to Internet surfers every month.

PTIG, which manufactures Hala Chips and Juice in Jordan, is also an agent for a number of worldwide products such as Lego, Matel, and FisherPrice.

In an even more digital

step, PTIG traders have even decided to cut a CD of their Web site for distribution in place of regular paper brochures.

Hammodeh Salon, near the Fifth Circle, shows examples of its best hair styles on the site. "I want to extend an electronic visit card so that people around the world recognise my name when I am abroad attending international hair style festivals."

The hair stylist and PTIG are available either through Primus, a local BBS, or the Web at www.cns.com.jo/petragroup and www.cns.com.jo/hammodeh, respectively.

Primus currently hosts the sites of 35 Jordanian companies and several organisations on its BBS in Amman, also accessible to the world's 65 million web users.

Fortunes of tourism industry continue to be tied to regional politics

By Amy Henderson
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan's tourism industry again is exhibiting its sensitivity to the regional political situation after a gloomy start to this year's high season.

"We are starting late this year. Every year, we face some kind of crisis," said Ziad Dakkak, general manager of Dakkak Tours and Travel, one of the top travel agencies in the country specialising in group tours.

"1995 was a very good year for tourism, and since then, the region has fallen into chaos," Dakkak said. "Dakkak Tours reported that 15-20 per cent of group tours booked in February cancelled in part or in whole. However, Mr. Dakkak said most of these have rescheduled for the autumn high season, which begins in late

September and lasts until late November.

"At least things will balance out at the end, but we still had hoped for more this year," he said. "Between now and the fall, we have to hope for a stable regional situation."

Many five-star hotels are now offering their rooms at off-season rates, and two tourist transport companies have cancelled daily tours to tourist destination number one, Petra. Jordan Express Tourist Transport (JETT) and Alpha stopped their services nearly two weeks ago after the low number of customers made the daily trip "financially unfeasible."

JETT, the country's oldest tourist transport company, expects to resume its service in April, but it is likely to be the only one of the country's three

transport companies to provide the daily service. Alpha, which commenced operations in 1995, has stopped daily tours to all locations in Jordan and instead has focused its efforts on capitalising on the upcoming Hajj.

In 1995, Jordan and Israel signed a bilateral agreement on tourism, which raised expectations on the prospects for boosting tourism through regional package tours. From 1995 through mid-1996, travel agents reported having to turn away tourists for lack of space and available transportation. At the close of the 1996 season, private sector business people faulted the policies of Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu and unfavourable developments in the peace process for hindering the number of arrivals.

Tourism principles described it

as "a year to forget."

Travel agents have said any expectations of attracting more tourists for the spring season this year — mid-February through May — were laid to rest with the massacre of 67 tourists in Luxor and the most recent standoff between the U.N. and Iraq over weapons inspections that for weeks appeared close to U.S. military intervention.

The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities has not finalised statistics for the first two months of this year, but agents reported that arrivals from the U.S., in fact, were hardest hit, and claimed that the American market has proven to be the market most sensitive to political developments.

The U.S. market constitutes a large part of the "religious pilgrimage" market, said Nihad

Safieh, general manager of Bluebird Tours, which targets the pilgrim market. His season, he said, is "devastated."

Jordan is trying to boost its appeal to this particular market and late last year announced plans to develop the baptism site of Jesus Christ by the year 2000 to capitalise on the expected millennium rush. The site, in Wadi Harrara, is roughly halfway between the Sheikh Hussein and King Hussein bridges and, as a military zone, was inaccessible prior to the 1994 peace treaty with Israel.

"It is always difficult to restore the confidence of this market," he said. "It will take another two years for us to gain them back, so we are concentrating now on the year 2000. But this too will depend on the tranquillity of the region. Christ or no Christ."

International Traders, another leading agency which specialises in incentive tours, reported that it received cancellations from a number of American groups but declined to say how many.

"It is difficult for us to define what we 'lost,'" says Grace Qassis, sales and marketing manager at Traders. "This all depends on the market you are referring to. American? European? Incentive groups? Conferences? Our American market was hit. Italians, on the other hand, are hindered by nothing."

"We can say that the crisis with Iraq did affect March and April, which are usually crazy, but we think that by May, things will be back to normal," she said. "But if this hadn't happened, this would have been our best season."

what's going on

FILMS

- * "Divine Words" at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman on Thursday, March 26 at 4:30 p.m.
- * "The Italian Artist Gurneo — 1912" at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh on Thursday, March 26 at 5:30 p.m. (presented and commented on in Arabic by Dr. Mazen Asfour).
- * "Apollo 13" at the American Center, Abdoun, on Thursday, March 26 at 5:00 p.m.
- * "Loch Ness" at British Council, Jabal Amman at 5:00 p.m.

AMMAN INTERNATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL

- * Two plays (in Arabic) entitled "And If" (Walaw) and "A Memory of Three Boxes" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 7:30 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. respectively.

LECTURES

- * Lecture (in Arabic) entitled "Valle-Incan's Aesthetic: the Ugliness" by Dr. Rifaa Atef at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman at 6:30 p.m.
- * Lecture (in Arabic) by Jordanian author Jamal Abu Hamdan about his book "Beautiful Death" and a study by Iraqi critic Trad Al Kubeisi at Darat Al Funun, Jabil Weibdeh at 6:00 p.m.
- * "Desert Castles" by Dr. Fawzi Zayyadeen at the Friends of Archaeology Centre (Tel. 5930682) at 6:00 p.m.

Clinton meets Ugandan leader in delicate phase of Africa tour

KAMPALA (AFP) — U.S. President Bill Clinton held talks Tuesday with one of Africa's new generation of leaders, Uganda's Yoweri Museveni, on the second day of a tour to revive Washington's ties with the continent.

Mr. Clinton arrived in Kampala late overnight from Ghana, where he began his six-nation tour Monday, and was able to snatch a few hours' sleep before starting a delicate phase of his trip in the strife-torn Great Lakes region.

He later met President Museveni, who fought his way to power in 1986. Mr. Museveni is now a duly elected head of state in Uganda who has established good ties with international lending institutions, but is also a leading proponent of "democracy without political parties."

The U.S. president's tour will include a summit Wednesday with heads of state from eastern and Central Africa, when he is expected to plead the cause of human rights and

democracy among the new breed of strongmen who have largely replaced Africa's post-colonial autocrats, but are themselves often controversial.

Ordinary Ugandans, meanwhile, got their first chance to see Mr. Clinton Tuesday afternoon, when he was due to fly by helicopter to the Kisowera primary school in Mukono, 15 kilometres east of Kampala.

In a speech there, the U.S. leader plans to present an "Education for Democracy and Good Government" initiative, aimed at providing basic schooling to African children. The White House asked Congress to put aside \$26 million for this programme in its budget submitted in February.

Pupils are due to give Mr. Clinton a gift of pumpkins, officials said, while he would present the school with an encyclopaedia.

Mr. Clinton will then visit a project at Wanyange village, close to the town of Jinja and the source of the Nile, where U.S. interests provide loans to women of

up to \$150 each to start small businesses.

In Ghana, Mr. Clinton proposed a new partnership with Africa but stressed the basic principles of human rights and democracy, two days ahead of the summit in Entebbe, Uganda, to be attended by men such as Mr. Museveni and the controversial Laurent Kabila of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Ahead of Mr. Clinton's tour, Washington has become increasingly outspoken over the human rights and democratic record of President Kabila's ex-rebels, whom it backed as they ousted dictator Mobutu Sese Seko last May after three decades of ruinous and kleptocratic rule over the former Zaire.

Mr. Kabila long stalled over allowing U.N. experts to investigate allegations of massacres by his forces during his seven-month uprising, which began close to the heart of an ethnic powder-keg region — eastern Zaire, Rwanda and Burundi. The Kinshasa

regime has also been accused of muzzling political foes and the press.

Critics have accused Washington, meanwhile, of closing its eyes to a lack of democracy in Uganda because it supports Mr. Museveni against the Islamic fundamentalist-backed military junta in neighbouring Sudan, which is on the U.S. blacklist of countries allegedly sponsoring state terrorism.

Wednesday, Mr. Clinton is due to make a brief trip to Rwanda, where he will hold talks with its leaders at Kigali airport before returning for the Entebbe summit.

AFP in Kigali reported differences between Rwandan and U.S. officials Tuesday as to whether Mr. Clinton will visit a memorial to victims of the 1994 genocide, in which Hutu troops and extremist militias massacred more than 500,000 people before being routed by rebels of the Tutsi minority.

Mr. Clinton goes Wednesday evening to South Africa, then Botswana and Senegal.



A Ugandan perches himself upon an arch which was built to welcome U.S. President Bill Clinton to this village outside of Kampala. Mr. Clinton was in Kisowera to visit a primary school (Reuters photo)

Tuberculosis could kill 20 million people in India — WHO

NEW DELHI (AFP) — More than 20 million people in India, where the incidence of tuberculosis is highest in the world, could die of the disease between now and 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said Tuesday.

WHO official Tom Frieden said India accounted for nearly 30 per cent of the seven to eight million new cases reported annually around the world.

Speaking on World Tuberculosis Day, he said the respiratory disease led to some 500,000 fatalities a year in India.

"For TB cure is better than prevention," he said, adding an infected person could transmit the disease to "between 10 and 15 persons" every year. In some cases it was to "more than 100 persons."

India's national tuberculosis programme started in 1962. The first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru died of the disease.

It was found, however, that some two-thirds of patients discontinued treatment, becoming chronic sufferers, transmitters and, more dangerously, incubators of a drug-resistant TB bacteria.

That led to closer monitoring of treatments after 1993 when a new programme was introduced where patients were administered pills by doctors or health workers to ensure that not even a single dose is missed out.

"We have had a success rate of 80 per cent," Mr. Frieden said of the new programme under which only a fraction of India's 960 million people has been treated.

Local experts, however, said the programme was flawed.

They said incentives for the programme, like rations of rice or wheat, would ensure better participation and results.

Mr. Frieden, however, argued incentives were not feasible because of the numbers of people involved.

Mira Shiva, an expert from the independent Voluntary Health Association of India, said the accent of the anti-TB programme was wrong.

"In 1991 the national budget for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) was 40 million rupees (\$1 million). A year later it became 700 million rupees (\$17 million) at the cost of such 'unfashionable' diseases like TB and malaria."

She said the problem for women sufferers was compounded by "gender politics", adding: "A woman is chucked out of the house if she has TB. If it is a man he is looked after ... by a woman — his wife, mother or sister right till the end."

"We have to make people aware that it is curable, that there is no stigma, that people like (British poet) Keats and Nehru's wife had it..."

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Papon defence in last bid to portray humanitarian, not monster

BORDEAUX, France (AFP) — Lawyers for French wartime official Maurice Papon, charged with crimes against humanity, Tuesday forged on with a final week's effort to portray the ageing defendant as humanitarian rather than monster.

After last week's summing-up by the prosecution and the mostly Jewish civil parties who have packed the courtroom during the historic five-month-plus trial, Maurice Papon and his legal team this week have centre stage.

Maurice Papon, 87, is charged with rubber-stamping the deportation of 1,500 Jews while he was an official of the collaborationist Vichy government during the Nazi occupation of France in World War II.

The Jews he is accused of deporting went to their deaths in Nazi camps.

Maurice Papon is the first and only French civil servant to face a modern-day war crimes trial, and the case has forced the French to come to grips with the Vichy government's wartime role in helping the Nazis.

Surveys indicate that a majority feel the long trial has been worthwhile, even if, as some commentators now speculate, Maurice Papon never goes to prison

by virtue of his age and lengthy appeals procedures in the case of a guilty verdict Friday.

A poll published by the daily Le Parisien Tuesday showed some 60 per cent of those asked felt it was right to try Maurice Papon after all these years.

They saw the trial as a catharsis, finally delivering some justice to the Jews who suffered, while informing the public about the nature of the Vichy government and thereby helping ensure the events are not repeated.

Tuesday afternoon, head defence lawyer Jean-Marc Vaurat, 65, was to begin what was being described as the longest and most impassioned argument of his career: 15 hours over three days, concluding Friday afternoon.

Then, as is the right and custom of all criminally accused in France, Maurice Papon himself will speak in his own defence before the nine jurors retire, in company of the three presiding judges as advisors, to deliberate their verdict.

Monday, another of Maurice Papon's defence lawyers, Francis Vuillemin, began summing up by portraying the accused as a member of the French Resistance and "a humanist" who dedicated his life to public service.

Maurice Papon, he said, "is not afraid of a fight. His secret: the truth. The aim of his battle: to defend his honour to the death."

"There is no arrogance when one has neither wanted nor committed crimes against humanity," Mr. Vuillemin said, countering the most common criticisms of Maurice Papon — the perceived arrogance and condescension with which he views the proceedings against him.

During the Vichy regime, the lawyer added, Maurice Papon had turned down three promotion offers and his duties as a government official during the 1950s and 1960s had been difficult.

Last week, the court's jury heard from prosecutors a different portrait of Maurice Papon, that of an "exceptionally intelligent, efficient and methodical" official who zealously enforced Nazi-imposed laws against Jews in 1940-41.

As the prosecutors summed up Thursday, accusing Maurice Papon of supplying the Nazis with information proving potential deportees were Jewish, and providing transport and passing on German orders to local police, the defendant rose indignantly and stormed out of the courtroom.

U.N. special envoy holds talks with Afghan Taliban government leader

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — U.N. special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi held talks Tuesday with Taliban interim government chief Mullah Muhammad Rabbani here Tuesday to discuss ways to bring peace to Afghanistan, diplomatic sources said.

Details about the meeting, which was also attended by a representative of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), were not available.

Earlier Mr. Rabbani met with Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who left afterwards for Saudi Arabia for consultations with Crown Prince Abdullah Bin Abdel Aziz, official sources said.

The Taliban officials also met Pakistani Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Siddique Kanju.

The joint U.N.-OIC peace mission arrived here Friday to try to open a peace process between the Taliban and a multi-faction opposition alliance battling the Islamic militia.

The Taliban hold two-thirds of Afghanistan, including the capital Kabul, seized by them in September, 1996. Their opponents control the northern part of the country.

Both the U.N. and the OIC want a cutoff of arms supplies to Afghan combatants, a ceasefire and dialogue between the adversaries for the establishment of a broadly representative Afghan government.

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Bosnian police arrest another Serb suspect

SARAJEVO (R) — Bosnian Federation police said Tuesday they had seized another Serb war crimes suspect in the Sarajevo region — the second in two days.

The man, named as Dragan Pejic, was arrested Monday in connection with alleged war crimes in the Sarajevo municipality of Hadzici, which was under Bosnian Serb control during the country's 3-1/2-year war.

A Sarajevo court issued a warrant for Mr. Pejic, who it suspects of committing crimes against humanity and serious violations of the Geneva convention.

The district attorney's office said in a statement the International Criminal Tribunal for former

Yugoslavia in the Hague believed there was sufficient evidence to press charges against Mr. Pejic. However he is not one of the men already indicted by the Hague.

Bosnian police confirmed the district attorney's statement by telephone.

The arrest came a day after Bosnian Muslim police arrested Serb Milomir Tepes on charges of war crimes in eastern Bosnia during 1992-95 war.

The tribunal has indicted 75 suspects, the majority of whom are Serb.

Nearly all are still at large, including the two most prominent suspects, former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic and former military commander Ratko Mladic.

Earl Spencer in Cambodia for anti-landmine campaign

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — Earl Spencer, brother of the late Princess of Wales, arrived in Cambodia Tuesday to carry on his sister's crusade against landmines, officials said.

The earl, who lives in South Africa and will be here until Thursday, is in Cambodia for the Cambodia Trust, a British-organisation that makes and distributes prosthetics for landmine victims.

"He is here on a low-key private visit, an education visit for him and for us," said Carson Hart of the Cambodia Trust which was founded in 1989 to facilitate development in this war-torn country.

The earl will be the guest of honour at a ceremony for students graduating from a three-year class in artificial limb fitting.

"He is interested in the work of the Cambodia Trust and has come as a private

person to offer his support," Mr. Hart said, stressing the visit was strictly personal.

Cambodia is one of the world's most heavily mined countries with an estimated four to six million of the hidden killers buried in its soil.

An estimated one in every 250 Cambodians — or 50,000 — have lost a limb to the devices, according to statistics from relief agencies.

The fight against landmines was one of Princess Diana's most cherished charity projects and she had planned to visit Cambodia last year — a trip that was cancelled for security reasons.

Her high-profile support of the campaign was considered instrumental in the signing last December of an international treaty banning anti-personnel landmines.

Cambodia is a signatory to that treaty which will take effect once 40 countries ratify it.

The deal was subject to several strict conditions, including an 18-month moratorium while controls are put in place to ensure that poached ivory does not find its way onto the market.

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) agreed that Zimbabwe, Namibia and Botswana could sell their ivory stocks, which had been rendered worthless by the ban.

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El Niño may bring severe flooding to southern China, official warns

BEIJING (AFP) — Southern China could face severe flooding this year due to the effects of the weather phenomenon El Niño, a senior official has warned.

Xinhua news agency said dikes have collapsed along China's longest river, the Yangtze, in a stretch of some 5.9 kilometres around Jiujiang city in Jiangxi province.

If the situation deteriorates, a fifth of the city's population of 4.7 million people will be at risk, Xinhua said, quoting a local official.

Dykes collapsed in 16 places and water is just a few metres away from some houses, said Cheng Xuanfa, head of the Jiujiang Water Resources and Electricity Bureau.

Since the start of winter the southern provinces of Jiangxi, Hunan, Fujian and Zhejiang have received four times the normal seasonal amount of rain.

Swollen rivers in these provinces are threatening to reach high levels. The situation is especially bad in Jiangxi where flooding of the Ganjiang, a tributary of the Yangtze, has affected 130,000 people covering 20,000 hectares of farmland, Xinhua said.

It quoted Zhou Wenzhi, vice minister of water resources, as saying the region could witness major flooding.

In Hunan, floods have already left two dead according to an official toll given at the start of the month.

Authorities have warned that tens of thousands of people could be killed if Lake Dongting, the second largest in the country, overflows as its banks cannot withstand huge rises in water levels.

Last year, floods left 600 people dead in southern China compared with 3,000 the summer before. Meanwhile, rising temperatures also wrought

havoc across much of the country last year, except Tibet which was spared, the China meteorological administration said Tuesday according to Xinhua.

Average temperatures were higher in 1997 than the year before, especially in the central provinces of Gansu, Shanxi and Shaanxi which recorded their highest average temperatures since 1949.

Winter temperatures were also at their highest levels in 11 years, two degrees above average in the north and one degree warmer in the south, the organisation said.

"The warming trend in China is basically occurring in tandem with global warming," said its Director Wen Kegang.

But the organisation warned of "catastrophic conditions" due to the warmer weather, especially in the north, where a drought has hit agricultural

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Sexual misconduct inquiry rocks Anglican church in Australia

HOBART, Australia (AFP) — A "grubby little circle" of paedophiles was operating within the Anglican church in Tasmania, a landmark inquiry found Tuesday.

The inquiry, the first of its kind to be held by the Anglicans in Australia, revealed 80 sexual misconduct complaints against 17 clergy or office holders, including child rape.

The report, set up last year by Bishop of Tasmania Phillip Newell, also disclosed criticisms of the church hierarchy had failed to act when complaints of sexual abuse were made to them.

Several women alleged misconduct against a priest "of some status" in Tasmania, whom they did not identify.

Bishop Newell appealed at a news conference for the priest to come forward.

"All of us feel in some way as though there is a witch-hunt, that we're under scrutiny, and it's a very difficult thing to deal with," he said.

The report said: "Child abuse ranged from once-off genital touching to relationships of approximately three years."

"Two males disclosed that they were raped while children. One woman disclosed child rape. One male indicated that he and his sister had been sexually abused by the same minister over a period of approximately five years."

"Eleven people indicated that they had suffered sexual abuse whilst boarders at Anglican schools."

The report said of particular concern was a report from a minister about conversations with a colleague who had been part of "a group of clergy with sexual proclivities towards young males."

The colleague, who was trying to break away from

the group, called it "that grubby little circle."

The report said a number of parents, ministers or church staff complained about "lack of action" after they had raised concerns with the church hierarchy.

"There is no reason to disbelieve these accounts," it said.

One woman said she had approached Bishop Newell after her son returned from a church camp saying he had been sexually interfered with.

"She expressed very considerable concern that the bishop's focus was on forgiveness for the perpetrator rather than on what she and her son were suffering," the report said.

Of those accused, one retired priest had already been suspended, others were dead, could not be traced, or were living interstate or overseas.

The report recommended giving the bishop more power to deal with sexual misconduct, ensuring the independence of the church's sexual harassment response group, improved ethical development courses, and that clergy be appointed with limited tenure.

Phillip Newell said the church had failed in managing allegations of sexual misconduct and promised that action would be taken on all the recommendations.

In a Perth court Tuesday, an ailing 80-year-old former minister Christian brother denied sexually abusing a boy under his care at a Catholic orphanage in the 1950s.

Lawrence Murphy pleaded guilty to nine counts of indecent dealings and five of unlawful carnal knowledge of a child under the age of 14.

He was granted bail to face trial on Sept. 1.

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Indian nationalists win test of strength before confidence vote

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India's new Hindu nationalist-led coalition won its first test of strength Tuesday in what is seen as a pointer to its chances of survival in a confidence vote later this week.

The bloc, just short of a parliamentary majority following indecisive elections, managed to get its candidate G.C. Balayogi elected as speaker of the badly fractured 545-seat Lower House of Parliament.

Mr. Balayogi, a lower-caste Hindu, is India's first "untouchable" speaker.

His win, analysts say, will provide a perfect preview for the confidence motion expected Friday and Saturday.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, whose Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party) is backed by a dozen disparate regional parties, was sworn in Thursday.

The coalition commands 264 out of 545 seats, just short of a majority but more than its main rivals the Congress (141) and the outgoing United Front coalition (84).

Mr. Vajpayee's chances of survival soared Monday when a regional party, the TDP (Telugu Desam Party), confirmed it was quitting the United Front and abandoning its opposition to the nationalists.

Mr. Balayogi is a member of the TDP. He was a lawyer before he turned to state politics.

If the 12-seat TDP, once rapidly anti-BJP, abstains or votes for Mr. Vajpayee at the weekend, he is sure of survival.

N. Bhaskar Rao, director of the independent Centre for Media Studies, said: "It is obvious ... they will win the confidence motion."

Mr. Rao said the nationalists were likely to last a full term of five years if they could survive the first 48 months. India, racked by political crises, has had five governments within two years.



Actress Kim Basinger (centre) poses with writers Brian Helgeland (left) and Curtis Hanson after the movie "L.A. Confidential" won an Oscar for best adapted screenplay at the 70th Annual Academy Awards (Reuters photo)

Hollywood's biggest night was Titanic event

LOS ANGELES (R) — It was one of Hollywood's biggest rolls of the dice, but it paid off when "Titanic" — which at one time seemed as doomed as its real-life inspiration — steamed off with 11 Oscars.

The 3-hour-plus epic was not the only winner on Hollywood's biggest night Monday. Helen Hunt was anointed Hollywood's new heroine for "As Good As It Gets" and newcomers Matt Damon and Ben Affleck were recognised for "Good Will Hunting".

Jack Nicholson won his third acting Oscar for "As Good As It Gets" and Robin Williams, in "Good Will Hunting", and Kim Basinger, in "L.A. Confidential" each won their first — for supporting roles — on a night that saw no real upsets.

But it was "Titanic" that loomed over the 70th annual academy awards show.

Many critics had predicted that with production costs of more than \$200 million, the movie was doomed to share the fate of such notorious Hollywood flops as "Heaven's Gate", "Cleopatra" and "Ishtar".

But Director James Cameron could hardly contain his glee as he stood backstage at the shrine auditorium cradling three of the coveted Oscars his film won.

"Vindicated?" he said in response to a reporter's question. "There is nothing negative here. This is just pure bliss."

Earlier, in his acceptance speech, the Canadian-born filmmaker stole a line from the movie's leading man played by Leonardo DiCaprio. "I am the king of the world, yeah."

When the film's scheduled opening last June was put back to December, the rumours began flying that "Titanic" was going to flop. The film's distributors, Paramount pictures and 20th Century Fox were going to take a bath, the cynics predicted.

But in Hollywood, where box-office is all that matters, the critics could not have been more wrong — in 14 weeks, it has sold more than \$1.2 billion in tickets worldwide.

Monday's haul of 11 Oscars from 14 nominations tied "Titanic" with 1959's "Ben-Hur" for the most Academy Awards.

Asked to explain the incredible success of the film, Cameron told reporters: "It's kind of an eastern idea. It's no one thing, but the correct balance. The scale and the intimacy balance each other in a way the audience can accept."

"I think people (leave) the theatre with conflicting emotions because they have joyous heights and they have despairing depths and then at the end they get some sense of uplift that makes them think about it and feel it."

Co-producer Jon Landau was more direct. "It's a total experience that combines everything. It immerses you with the story, bombards you with the visual and hits you with the audio."

Despite winning for Best Picture, Best Director and Best Song and Score, as well as sweeping the more technical Oscars such as Editing and Sound, "Titanic" significantly missed out on the two acting categories in which it was nominated.

Kate Winslet lost as best actress to Hunt and 87-year-old Gloria Stuart, a sentimental favourite, missed out on the best supporting actress to Basinger.

DiCaprio, one of the main reasons Titanic has been such a box-office hit — especially among young girls — was not nominated and did not attend Monday's awards show.

Among other Oscar winners were the Dutch film "Character" for best foreign film, "Geri's Game" for Best Animated Short and "A Story of Healing" for Best Documentary Short.

Britain's Anne Dudley won for best original score in a comedy for "The Full Monty", while another box-office smash, "Men in Black" won for best makeup.

The group — Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Russia and the United States — set a deadline which expired last Thursday for Belgrade to withdraw Serbian special police forces and begin talks or face more sanctions.

The deadline has been largely ignored.

U.S., Italy call for firm stance towards Belgrade

ROME (AFP) — U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and her Italian counterpart Lamberto Dini called for a firm stance towards Belgrade Tuesday to ensure that a peaceful solution can be found for Kosovo.

Following a breakfast meeting here, the foreign ministers agreed there had been some progress in the drive to end the Serbian crackdown on ethnic Albanians in Kosovo but that more needs to be done.

It is vital for the Contact Group and the international community at large to keep a firm stance towards Belgrade," Mr. Dini said.

"We agreed that some things have been done but other things — the most important — remain pending," the Italian foreign minister said.

The United States appeared to be increasingly at odds with its European partners on whether diplomatic pressure should be given more time to yield results in Kosovo.

Mrs. Albright insisted that Mr. Milosevic had yet to

withdraw his security forces from the region as demanded, saying that the troops "are just digging in."

But she welcomed the education agreement signed Monday that will allow ethnic Albanians to attend classes taught in their language, saying it was "the most significant confidence-building measure" in the region since Kosovo was stripped of its autonomy in 1989.

Under the agreement, ethnic Albanian students and professors would be allowed to reenter three faculties at the University of Pristina by April 30, another three by May 31, and seven further faculties by June 30.

Despite these steps, Mrs. Albright said European governments should not be satisfied with "half-sincere half-measures" from Belgrade, making clear her deep distrust of Mr. Milosevic. She also called for solidarity ahead of the Bonn meeting that is expected to yield agreements, in particular from Russia which continues to oppose an arms embargo

against Federal Yugoslavia that was decided at the London meeting.

While Mrs. Albright emphasised the need for a strong stance towards Mr. Milosevic, Mr. Dini noted that the contact group must also send a clear message to secessionist Albanians in Kosovo that "the road to independence is not feasible."

Mr. Dini declined to say whether he would support a freeze on the assets of federal Yugoslavia, a measure that was decided in London.

Following her meeting with Mr. Dini, Mrs. Albright went to the Vatican for talks with officials on Cuba.

U.S. President Bill Clinton last week eased sanctions on Cuba to address the humanitarian needs on the Communist-ruled island that were highlighted during Pope John Paul II's visit to Cuba in January.

Mrs. Albright was to travel to Bonn later for a dinner meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov.

Yeltsin meets Kremlin team, lauds defence minister

MOSCOW (R) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin returned to work in the Kremlin Tuesday and made clear he intended to keep the defence and foreign ministers in their jobs, Interfax news agency reported.

The president is in the Kremlin now, a press service spokesman said by telephone. He was unable to give details of Mr. Yeltsin's plans for the day; Monday he had sacked his entire cabinet.

The spokesman confirmed Mr. Yeltsin had met Defence Minister Igor Sergeev and Nikolai Kovalyov, head of the FSB domestic intelligence service, Monday soon after dismissing the government.

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Interfax news agency quoted presidential spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky as saying Mr. Yeltsin met members of his administration team Tuesday to discuss their work in the light of the government dismissal.

It quoted Mr. Yastrzhembsky as saying Mr. Yeltsin had pointed to

several shortcomings in the outgoing government but praised Mr. Sergeev and Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov, an Arabist and former spy master.

"The president was highly appreciative of the performance of the heads of the defence and foreign ministries," Interfax quoted Mr. Yastrzhembsky as saying.

"This can be interpreted as a sign that Primakov and Sergeev will keep their jobs," Interfax said.

Mr. Yeltsin made clear soon after sacking his cabinet that foreign and economic policy would not change.

By meeting Mr. Sergeev in the Kremlin before returning to his Gorky-9 residence Monday, the president had already underscored his support for the defence minister and his military reform programme.

Apart from Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, Mr. Yeltsin singled out only two ministers who will not be retained in the new cabinet. One was reformer Anatoly Chubais and the other was the hard-line interior minister, Anatoly Kulikov.

Mr. Sergeev recently criticised Mr. Kulikov for opposing plans to create all-professional armed forces to replace conscription. The interior ministry has more than 200,000 troops at its disposal.

Albright expresses U.S. support for Yeltsin in wake of shake-up

ROME (AFP) — Secretary of State Madeleine Albright voiced U.S. support Tuesday for Russian President Boris Yeltsin as he and his new prime minister prepared to piece together a new government.

"We are obviously watching what is going on," Mrs. Albright said here following talks with Italian Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini.

"President Yeltsin is in charge and he has, as a democratically elected leader, the ability to change his team," she said.

Mrs. Albright added that she was "looking forward" to a meeting later in the day with Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov and to "continuing what is a good working relationship with the Russian federation."

In Moscow, Mr. Yeltsin and acting Prime Minister Sergei Kiriyenko, a young reformist, began consultations on the formation of a new government that was not expected to be radically different from the outgoing one.

The Russian president Monday sacked the government of Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, who had developed a close working relationship with U.S. Vice President Al Gore.

Serb clampdown continues in Kosovo

VIENNA (AFP) — Serb police in Kosovo have continued a heavy-handed clampdown in Kosovo despite the threat of sanctions by the international community, a rights group said Tuesday.

At least three people have been killed and over 100 hurt since a March 9 meeting of the six-member Contact Group in London issued an ultimatum to Belgrade over the Kosovo action, said the International Helsinki Federation.

"Over 100 people have been beaten, maltreated and injured in the course of Serbian police interventions in peaceful protests since the meeting," it said in an open letter to the Contact Group, which meets again Wednesday in Bonn.

In addition, "at least three Albanians have been killed either by snipers or by excessive police violence after the Contact Group meeting in London," it said.

The London Contact Group meeting was called amid international outrage after a Serb clampdown in the majority ethnic Albanian province resulted in some 80 deaths.

The group — Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Russia and the United States — set a deadline which expired last Thursday for Belgrade to withdraw Serbian special police forces and begin talks or face more sanctions.

The deadline has been largely ignored.

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Political gloves off for Hong Kong's first post-handover elections

HONG KONG (AFP) — The political gloves came off Monday ahead of Hong Kong's first elections under Chinese rule as the Democrats, ousted at the handover of power, launched their campaign with a call for full democracy.

Describing the electoral arrangements as "ridiculous," Party Chairman Martin Lee called for a fully elected chamber, an elected Chief Executive and a revamped Executive Council.

"In order to uphold the rule of law there must be democratic institutions," he said.

Mr. Lee who, along with his colleagues, was kicked out of the legislature last July when British rule ended, vowed a tough fight but said the dice were stacked against the democratic camp by the electoral arrangements.

"Regrettably the electoral laws have been amended ... by a non-accountable Beijing-selected legislature," Mr. Lee told reporters at the party's press launch.

"Untold harm has been done because it guarantees the Beijing leaders a legislature which it can control."

Under the arrangements for May's elections only a third of the seats will be decided by direct election.

"The whole system has been designed to reduce our numbers," he complained.

In Hong Kong's only previous legislative council elections, in 1991 and 1995, the Democrats were the big winners, taking, along with their

close political allies, the lion's share of the directly elected seats.

This time around, Mr. Lee argued, their customary 65 per cent support rate among voters "a landslide victory in any democratic country" would translate into a mere 15 of the 60 seats up for grabs.

Under the rules for the May 24 elections, only 20 of the 60 seats will be chosen by direct geographical constituency election. The others will be picked by interest groups or an election committee.

While contesting some of the functional constituency seats, the Democrats will not put forward candidates for the seats to be decided by the 800-strong election committee which Mr. Lee dismissed as "a farce."

A spokesman for the government's constitutional affairs bureau said the ultimate objective, as laid down in Hong Kong's Basic Law which Beijing drew up, is universal suffrage.

"But that has to be decided by the people of Hong Kong after the year 2007 as stipulated in the Basic Law," the spokesman added.

2007 will mark 10 years of Chinese rule over Hong Kong. Under the terms of the Sino-British agreement of 1984, the free-wheeling capitalist lifestyle here and a high degree of autonomy are promised for 50 years.

As far as the chief executive's post, currently held by Tung Chee-Hwa, is concerned, any amendment to

Internet, globalisation aiding paedophilia — Interpol

MANILA (AFP) — The world's police forces are floundering as trans-continental operators peddle impoverished Third World children via cyberspace in the fast global trading environment, experts said here Tuesday.

Groups are "subverting" the Internet to traffic women and children and ease of travel has enabled paedophiles to move from one country to another, experts said on the sidelines of an Asia-Pacific conference on crime here.

Before the advent of cyberspace, organisations used to operate by mail or advertise sex with children in the newspapers.

"But recently, they found the Internet. So they have their little chat rooms where each can go to," said Paul Higdon, director of Interpol's Liaison and Criminal Intelligence Directorate based in Lyon, France.

"It's a coded area within the Internet and they can talk and exchange dirty pictures and do whatever paedophiles do," he told AFP in an interview on the

sidelines of the conference which ends Wednesday.

But policing the Internet is "very difficult," he said. "We're trying to get a handle on that now. We're trying to understand better how these people operate. We're in touch with local area providers ... getting help from them on how to prevent this marvellous communication method from being subverted for criminal activities," he said.

Mr. Higdon said the frequency of air travel has also allowed paedophiles to go from one country to another.

"On a trans-national nature, by the very virtue of aeroplane travel, it's so easy now to cross borders that frequently," he said.

"In the light of that, where crimes used to be committed at a national level, now you have crimes being committed across borders very frequently and paedophilia is certainly one of those crimes," he added.

But he said "there's a lot of people from the more developed countries going

to the less developed countries because of the economic situation" and "there are countries where parents even sell their children to paedophile groups."

Dealing with groups engaged in the trafficking of women and children is just like handling other crime gangs, Mr. Higdon said, noting successful prosecution of suspects rests on evidence gathered by an expansive intelligence network.

Based on Interpol's experience, there was no real interest in paedophile cases among police agencies until Belgium in 1996 was rocked by revelations that Belgian convicted sex offender Marc Dutroux had allegedly kidnapped and killed several children there.

"That was the turning point," he said, admitting paedophilia normally is a crime that "no one likes to talk about."

He also said weak laws in developing countries in dealing with paedophilia could be the reason why some industrialised countries have passed legisla-

tion allowing them to prosecute their nationals who molest children in other countries.

Alberto Bradanini of the U.N. Office of Drug Control and Crime Prevention told the conference Monday there was little data on the trafficking of women and children.

He said his office has started a "major study on this phenomenon" to come up with a global strategy.

Asian women have been lured into "high paying jobs" within the region, in the Middle East but end up in prostitution dens, while children have been forced into sexual slavery by foreign paedophiles, he said.

"This situation should not be tolerated," Mr. Bradanini told delegates.

Philippine Justice Secretary Silvestre Bello told the conference Tuesday foreign paedophiles flock to developing countries "for sexual gratification with lesser risk" of being infected with the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

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Way to counter arrogance

ISRAELI PRIME Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's continued refusal to implement signed accords with the Palestinians, especially regarding the long-overdue redeployment of troops and building and enlargement of illegal settlements in the occupied territories, has caused Israel's last remaining staunch ally, the U.S., great embarrassment.

The latest Gulf crisis has highlighted double standards in U.S. policies in the Middle East sparking widespread Arab criticism of Washington's protective stand towards Israel in the U.N., allowing the Netanyahu government to get away with its historical disregard for international resolutions and legitimacy.

But to go as far as threaten President Bill Clinton with unleashing Israel's formidable lobbying powers against him if he were to go public with the new peace plan, as did a senior Israeli official Monday, is not only to bite the hand that has been feeding the Jewish state, but to turn embarrassment already inflicted upon the superpower into public humiliation.

The unnamed official who spoke to Israel's radio didn't forget, however, to attach a simple way out for the Clinton administration before they have to deal with the Israeli lobby in Washington face-to-face. The whole crisis would be resolved if the U.S. were to turn its proposal into "suggestions," he said, an action that would allow his government to react with flexibility.

The arrogance of this Israeli administration was also evident during British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook's visit to the Jewish state when Netanyahu treated his guest with disrespect by cancelling a joint press conference, along with the basic protocols of hospitality. Analysts read into these actions a clear Israeli message to the U.S. administration that Israel would not allow any party to pressure it into conforming to international legitimacy, and is willing to viciously attack back with all means available.

The Palestinians, on the other hand, even though they would be asked to make major concessions under the new U.S. proposal, have not rejected it outright. They are willing to consider anything that will take the peace process out of the current impasse before the political crisis developed from words to hard-core action.

Knowing beforehand Israel's reaction to any new plan or proposal, the U.S. has to choose one of two options now: face up to Israel and enforce international legitimacy or lose its credibility as an honest broker in Mideast peace-making. This is a decision that should be made by the Americans before Special Envoy Dennis Ross arrives in the region. Ross should not come here worried whether the proposal he is carrying should be renamed a "suggestion" or he will be extended an invitation to a seat at Netanyahu's dinner banquet.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Yusef Hourani urged the U.S. to consider the series of failures of its policies in the Middle East and steer future policies in a manner that would secure its own interests as well as help the people of this region enjoy justice and comprehensive peace. The U.S. was rebuffed by its own allies in the Arab World and Europe when it sought to carry out a military strike on Iraq because it had lost its credibility with these allies, especially the Arabs, because of its double standard policies, according to the writer. He said in the question of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, the U.S. has found itself isolated and had to give up its insistence on launching a strike on Baghdad, and so the way for a diplomatic settlement was open for the U.N. secretary general. In the Lockerbie affair, the International Court of Justice has ruled that the Libyans must have a free and fair trial in a neutral country, thus serving a major blow to the U.S. position with regard to that affair. The U.S. has to realise that the tension in this region has been mounting largely in view of Israel's arrogance and its disregard of justice and U.N. resolutions, said the writer. He called on Washington to help end this tension so as to prevent further explosions.

Al Ra'i's Mufid Nahleh said the series of parental crimes committed against children indicates that there is something terribly wrong with the Jordanian society. We should not merely express disgust or condemnation of the killing or abuse by a father or mother of their children but we ought to think of a way to rid society of such crimes, said the writer. In recent months Jordanians have been shocked to learn about murders committed by parents against their own young children, crimes that have been attributed to poverty, unemployment and a state of despair, he noted. These reports about child abuse or child murder by parents are alien to Jordanian society which is known for its regard for the welfare of children and senior citizens, Nahleh added. He said it is the duty of the national institutions that concern themselves with social issues to examine the recent horrible incidents, involve themselves in helping the concerned authorities deal with the causes behind such crimes, urge the government to speed up work on means of addressing the question of poverty and propose remedies to these ills.

Washington Watch

Arab Americans challenge official violations of rights

By Dr. James J. Zogby

ARAB AMERICANS have made significant progress in all areas of American life. A review of official U.S. statistics shows that Arab Americans have one of the highest rates of educational accomplishment of any U.S. ethnic community and a personal income level well above the national average. They also have one of the U.S.'s highest levels of business ownership and participation in all of the professions.

A recent brochure written by the popular television and radio personality, Casey Kasem, on Arab Americans, highlights the accomplishments of more than 100 famous U.S. entertainers, athletes, business leaders, fashion designers, screenwriters, and politicians — all Arab Americans. It is an impressive list and, when put together with economic and social data mentioned above, represents a tribute both to the hard work of Arab Americans and to the freedom and opportunity provided by American democracy.

Despite these successes, however, there are also difficulties. Problems of discrimination remain. America, with all of its greatness, also has its dark side where intolerance and ignorance reign.

Arab American and American Muslim organisations publish annual reports detailing instances of discrimination and even violence against people of Arab descent. Despite increases in these incidents in times of crises, the numbers remain somewhat lower than those affecting other victimised communities. Arab American and American Muslim organisations continue to be vigilant and determined to challenge this problem through education and, when necessary, political and legal action.

The most serious discrimination issues facing some Arab Americans and Arab residents in the United States, however, are not those resulting from personal or group discrimination and bigotry. More dangerous is the targeting of the community by official agencies of the U.S. government.

The Arab American Institute (AAI) has recently submitted a report to U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno requesting that the Justice Department investigate abuses of the rights of Arab Americans by agencies of the government.

The report specifically calls attention to the activities of three of those agencies: the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS).

Federal Bureau of Investigation: The FBI is the national law enforcement agency of the U.S. government. But far from protecting the rights of Arab Americans, the FBI has, for at least three decades, been involved in a systematic violation of those rights. The same FBI that has failed to apprehend even one individual suspected of hate crimes, including murder, against Arab Americans, has since the 1970s orchestrated campaigns of surveillance and harassment directed against Arab American leaders, activists, and organisations.

During the Nixon administration, for example, the White House ordered "Operation Boulder" which targeted Arab American leaders and activists. After three years of intimidating and harassing hundreds, the "operation" was suspended.

Beginning again in the late 1970s and continuing through-

out the 1980s, the FBI maintained intense surveillance against a number of Arab American organisations and leaders. In every instance, the activities being investigated (and at times disrupted by FBI actions) were peaceful, legal and constitutionally protected. Throughout this entire period not one Arab American or Arab resident was found to be engaged in any illegal pursuit.

During the 1990-1991 build-up in the Gulf, the FBI's harassment campaign reached the level of absurdity. In a public press release, the agency announced that it would visit over 200 Arab American business and community leaders to determine the extent of a terrorist threat to the United States. Among those visited were elected officials. Outrage at this patently discriminatory practice was universal, from major newspaper editorials to legislation sponsored in the Senate and House of Representatives. The FBI stopped its programme, but refused to apologise for the embarrassment it had caused.

Federal Aviation Administration: In recent years airport profiling has become a major concern of Arab Americans. "Profiling" is the system that has been put into place at U.S. and some international airports in order to enhance air security. Passengers intending to travel are judged by airport personnel against a list of characteristics and traits, drawn up by the FAA in order to identify individuals most likely to pose a terrorist threat. Individuals who fit the profile are separated from the other passengers and investigated more closely before being allowed to board their flight.

U.S. law specifically prohibits the use of any racial, ethnic or religious characteristic in making up the profile, and the FAA denies that these characteristics are used in the profile. Nevertheless Arab American organisations have developed a compelling case that demonstrates that Arab Americans and American Muslims are being singled out for special discriminatory treatment. Hundreds of affidavits and complaints from Arab Americans have been forwarded to the FAA establishing this case. To date there has been no satisfactory response.

Immigration and Naturalisation Service: Many immigrant groups have reported difficulties in dealing with the INS, and Arab Americans are no different in this respect. Treatment by local immigration officials can often be harsh and discriminatory. But Arab Americans have a unique concern with this agency. In 1996 Congress passed anti-terrorism legislation which allows "secret evidence" to be used in deportation cases of suspected "terrorists." Arab American and Muslim American rights organisations have appealed this legislation since it violates the U.S. Constitution which guarantees the right of every defendant to see all evidence and confront any witnesses in an open court.

In addition to this constitutional issue is the concern with the selective and even discriminatory application of this legislation. At present "secret evidence" is being used in a number of pending deportation cases — all of them involving defendants of Arab descent. No other ethnic community is currently being targeted. In a few of these cases, when the judges have actually reviewed the "secret evidence," they have found

the INS's case to be so insubstantial or politically motivated that they have ruled against the agency. The INS has appealed each of these cases and continues to press for deportation.

What concerns Arab Americans is the level to which all three government agencies appears to have fallen prey to anti-Arab prejudice and politically motivated efforts designed to weaken Arab American advancements.

For example, for decades the FBI has had a close working relationship with the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), an American Jewish organisation with an anti-Arab agenda. The ADL has spied on Arab American organisations, maintains intelligence files on these groups and shares its information with the FBI and other government agencies.

The Arab American complaint to the Attorney General questions the extent to which the behaviour of these government agencies toward Arab Americans is motivated by the prejudiced assumption that Arabs and Muslims are a "suspect group."

A senior FAA official acknowledged as much during a discussion with Arab American leaders. He indicated that in fact, the agency did view Arabs and Muslims as more prone toward terrorist activity than any other group. This assumption is directly contradicted by statistics issued by the FBI and the State Department. In the two decades that the FBI has been collecting data on terrorism in the United States, Arabs or Muslims account for only three of the almost 200 reported terrorist incidents.

In contrast, Jewish groups accounted for 18 incidents and Hispanic groups account for more than 50. On the international scene, annual State Department terrorism reports show that the region of the world where the greatest number of anti-U.S. terrorist attacks occur is Latin America. The Middle East is a distant third.

Despite this data, some government officials continue to make the unsubstantiated assertion that Arabs and Muslims represent the U.S.'s number one terrorist threat. It is this attitude that accounts for the biased behaviour government agencies have demonstrated toward Arab Americans and Arab residents in the United States.

In the complaint to the Attorney General, Arab Americans charge the FBI, FAA and INS with a pattern of biased behaviour. It is important to note that this behaviour has an impact beyond those targeted by the agencies.

Ultimately the community as a whole has been affected. Victims of FAA profiling, for example, have included: doctors, university professors, elderly grandparents, and prominent second-generation businessmen. All have been stopped and harassed at U.S. and international airports. And the only common characteristic shared by this disparate group of victims of profiling, was that they were Arab Americans.

Arab Americans thus are challenging these discriminatory government practices because they present a direct threat to the community's further empowerment and advancement in the United States.

'Threat presented by Saddam is much exaggerated'

By Martin van Crevel

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM

Now that the Iraq crisis appears to be over, we can see it for what it truly was. In my view, the threat that Saddam Hussein presents today has been vastly exaggerated both in the United States and here in Israel.

With his military force still weakened by the 1991 Gulf war and his economy crippled by seven years of sanctions, the Iraqi president is incapable of mounting a serious assault of anyone by air, land or sea.

It is hard to know precisely what the economic situation in Iraq is today; the country's economic data have long been considered a state secret. But in 1990, the last year for which reliable estimates exist, the International Institute of Strategic Studies in London suggested that Iraq, with its 18 million people, had a gross domestic product that was equal to between 1 and 2 per cent of that of the United States.

Since then the country has lost a major war, endured a series of vicious civil wars in which thousands (and possibly tens of thousands) were killed, lost control over much of its northern territory and been subject to sanctions that deprived it of approximately two-thirds of its major source of hard currency, oil. Short of some hidden miracle, the Iraqi economy must certainly have fallen to a small fraction of its former size.

What is more, Iraq has never had any major arms-producing industries, and because it is almost entirely surrounded by hostile countries it is unlikely to have received significant amounts of arms from elsewhere. It is a Third World country without a highly developed technological or manufacturing infrastructure. (Who remembers ever buying anything, apart from dried dates, with the label "Product of Iraq" or it?)

As the Gulf war demonstrated, Iraq did succeed in assembling a primitive ver-

sion of a 1950-vintage Soviet medium-range missile. But the attempts to extend the Scud's range were so inept that the missiles fired at Israel in 1991 often disintegrated in mid-air.

Even at the peak of his power in 1990, Saddam Hussein's engineers could not build major weapon systems such as aircraft, artillery pieces or tanks, let alone develop the sophisticated electronics necessary to guide the weapons they carried to their targets.

And now, faced with a shortage of spare parts (which his country, without a large automotive or electronics industry, cannot produce), Saddam Hussein is probably incapable of carrying out any large-scale military ground movements. That would require putting into working order the 3,000 or so vehicles needed to move a modern armoured division.

Even if he could muster his troops, it is highly unlikely that his air defence system, which was all but destroyed in 1991, has been rebuilt enough to protect their movements against the kind of air attack that the United States could direct against them.

As for Saddam Hussein's vaunted "weapons of mass destruction" and the infrastructure needed to produce them, they are less of a threat than they have been made out to be — and bombing would not have done away with them, anyway.

As some of America's leading scientists confirmed for me recently, the sort of biological and chemical weapons that Saddam Hussein is thought to have developed can be produced by any university laboratory, and with very limited means. Even if, by some miracle, the last germ-bearing vial in the last Iraqi laboratory could be targeted and blown up, or be dismantled by U.N. Special Commission inspectors, the vial's contents could be quickly recreated.

Of course, the missiles that deliver chemical and biological weapons are harder to

produce. But after seven years of the UNSCOM inspectors' unrelenting hunt for them, it is hard to believe that Saddam Hussein still has many left — or that he possesses the command-and-control infrastructure needed to launch more than a handful of them at one time.

More important still, the grouping of chemical and biological weapons together with nuclear weapons under the common rubric of "mass destruction" is misleading for the following reasons: As the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki so spectacularly demonstrated, nuclear weapons are capable of destroying entire cities — even countries — in a matter of seconds; by contrast, chemical and biological weapons, however horrible they may be, allow their targets hours or even days in which to act and react.

In that time, cities can be evacuated, affected areas decontaminated, and those people who have fallen ill can be treated with medicines and antidotes. Many may die, but the society and its infrastructure will survive. A whole arsenal of chemical and bacteriological weapons is no match for even the least powerful of America's 10,000 nuclear weapons — and it is not even clear that Iraq has many.

Indeed, one argument for Saddam Hussein's reluctance to allow inspections has been that he has so few weapons left that he does not want to reveal his weakness.

The United States' main Arab allies, such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt, seem to realise that Saddam Hussein presents a minimal threat to his neighbours, let alone to more distant countries. With the exception of Kuwait, which obviously felt obliged to follow the call, they refused to join in the recent crusade against Iraq.

Yet, senior U.S. policy makers seemed intent on magnifying the Iraqi threat. And Israel followed suit, partly because it wants to side with the United States,

partly because it hopes to obtain additional free or discounted military equipment, and partly because Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu wants to postpone for as long as possible additional withdrawals from the West Bank.

And the threat seems particularly overblown considering the arsenal in Israel's hands. Saddam Hussein must realise that the first chemical or biological warhead launched against Tel Aviv would almost certainly be the last.

While it is hard to understand the motivation behind the United States' belligerence, there is a larger and more positive lesson to be drawn from the crisis.

Ever since 1946, when first the Nuremberg trials and then the U.N. Charter identified conducting "aggressive" war as a crime, states have been losing their previously undisputed right to use force against their neighbours.

President Bill Clinton's wrangling with the U.N. Security Council and its emissary, Secretary-General Kofi Annan, brings to mind the way in which medieval rulers once required the Pope's consent before going to war: until about A.D. 1300, to wage war without the pontiff's blessing was to pay a heavy political price. Now, at the end of the millennium, even the world's sole remaining superpower finds it extraordinarily difficult to go to war without first obtaining the sanction of international law.

Thus the recent crisis may be remembered, if at all, as one more stepping-stone towards delegitimising war between nations. Considering the havoc that wars have wrought on the world during the first half of the 20th century, that is not such a bad thing at all.

The writer is a military historian at Hebrew University in occupied Jerusalem. This article is reprinted from the International Herald Tribune.

LETTERS

'Dangerous precedent'

To the editor:

I READ with great interest the article headlined "Fulbright employee threatens legal action over dismissal for political activities" (Jordan Times, March 22, 1998). I believe that this case sets a very dangerous precedent. One is forced to question the limits of basic freedoms that are constitutionally guaranteed to Jordanians.

As Jordanians we have a right, if not a responsibility, acting within the limits of the law, to bring up issues that we feel are important. Should we now be worried to speak up because we may lose our job? Ms. Dabbas carried out the activities mentioned in her personal time and in her capacity as a Jordanian citizen and did not break any laws in Jordan or in the U.S. Moreover, it is my understanding that the Fulbright programme was established as a result of the late Senator Fulbright's frustration with U.S. foreign policy vis-a-vis developing nations. Senator Fulbright was one of the harshest critics of his government's double standards. He has been quoted as saying in a Senate speech: "We must dare to think 'unthinkable thoughts.' We must learn to explore all the options and possibilities that confront us in a complex and rapidly changing world. We must learn to welcome and not fear the voices of dissent. We must dare to think the 'unthinkable things' because when things become unthinkable, thinking stops and action becomes mindless."

It seems to me that his vision has been lost somewhere along the way. The goal of free exchange of knowledge and ideas, risks being lost as well.

As a Jordanian, the dismissal of Ms. Dabbas appalls me, and I believe that our constitutional rights should not be violated and we should not worry about losing our jobs just because someone does not like what we say, as private Jordanian citizens.

Kholood Abdo
Amman

Arbitrary application of laws

To the editor:

IT IS a sad day when a Jordanian citizen is allowed to be arbitrarily fired from her job for exercising her constitutionally guaranteed right of freedom of expression. According to the article by Amy Henderson, Ms. Aida Dabbas was fired from her job as programme officer at the Binational Fulbright Commission because she expressed her anger over U.S. policy towards Iraq. If this is allowed to happen then we are being made to understand that our Constitution can be ignored when people who hold power decide to do so. I call on the Jordanian government, as partners in the binational agreement with the Fulbright Commission, to investigate this case and prove to the Jordanian people that our basic rights as Jordanians are something to be taken seriously.

I. Badran
Amman

Universal Declaration of Human Rights turns 50

A better future lies in realm of spirit, moral order and renewed sense of responsibility

Following is the text of the speech delivered by Czech Republic President Václav Havel at the March 16 event commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Geneva.



Václav Havel

A NUMBER of diverse texts have played a fundamental role in human history. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights differs from all the others primarily in one respect: its impact has not been meant to remain confined within one culture or one civilisation. From the very outset, it has been envisaged as a universal, so to speak planetary, set of principles to govern human coexistence, and it has gradually become the point of departure for countless successive guidelines defining the rules of a worthy life together for the people and nations on this Earth. Texts of such fundamental nature are not easily born. The Declaration of Human Rights was obviously the fruit of a very special climate right after World War II, when all humanity realised that if the world wanted to prevent repetitions of such apocalyptic horrors it had to rise above the various particular interests or concerns of prestige, and to agree on a certain fundamental code.

The life of the Declaration of Human Rights has been marked by contradictions.

On one hand, the declaration has notably predetermined the direction of the United Nations in the 50 years that have followed. Its imprint is borne by many ensuing U.N. documents, as well as by hundreds of international treaties and constitutional instruments of individual nations. It was also present in the background of the well-known Final Act of the 1975 Helsinki conference. The emphasis placed in that document on human rights helped to put an end to the bipolar division of the world. It added momentum to the opposition movements in the communist countries who took the accords signed by their governments seriously, and intensified their struggle for the observance of human rights, thus challenging the very essence of totalitarian systems.

On the other hand, it is also true that human rights have been violated, ignored or suppressed in many countries of the world — in some of them in milder forms, in others very brutally — throughout the 50 years since the declaration was adopted. This is not surprising: the immensely complex world that we live in can hardly be changed overnight simply by passing a declaration.

Nevertheless, I believe that the frequent breaches of its principles have been far outweighed by the historic importance of this global commitment. For the first time in history, there has been a valid, and globally respected, instrument holding up a mirror to the misery of this world: a universal standard by which we can constantly compare the actual state of affairs, to which we can point, and in whose name we can act, to combat injustices if need be. Since everyone has subscribed to this standard, few would venture to criticise it as such. This means that all those who commit substantial violations of its principles must face this historical novelty. To put it simply: the life of all those who scorn human rights is much more difficult with the declaration in place, than it was before.

For this reason we must not allow the subject of human rights and their consistent enforcement to be quietly relegated to a second-class

or third-class status as an inconvenient and politically inexpedient issue. Massive violations of fundamental human rights, which clearly include the right of life, is in fact, often invoked to explain or defend national or state interests, and is, unfortunately, becoming an everyday reality which, in the past decade, we could watch in almost a live transmission. The genocide in Rwanda, the killing in Chechnya, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the situation in Tibet, North Korea, Burma, Cuba and Kosovo — this is but a part of the list of events we have to bear in mind. Backed by the provisions

...the life of all those who scorn human rights is much more difficult with the declaration in place, than it was before.

of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we should be able to confront these threats to human life, freedom and dignity, or at least to always clearly identify them. Why have human beings the prerogative to enjoy human rights? I often ask myself this question, and I have dealt with it many times in my speeches. Time and again, I come to the conclusion that this is something essentially different, and much more profound, than a mere contract among people who have found it practical to have their rights articulated and guaranteed in some way or other, and to have an instrument restricting, automatically, the rights of those who could, or who would wish to, deny them their rights or jeopardise their exercise. In formal terms, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, indeed, takes the form of a contract or covenant, like the hundreds of thousands of laws or regulations governing human coexistence. This covenant, however, derives from certain paradigms, established notions or preconditions that need no further explanation. Let us take, for example, the concept of human dignity. In one way or another, it permeates all the fundamental human rights and human rights documents. We find this so natural that we see no point in

asking what human dignity actually means, or why should humanity possess it; or do we inquire why it is practical for us all to recognise it for one another.

I am convinced that the deepest roots of that which we now call human rights lie somewhere beyond us, and above us; somewhere deeper than the world of human covenants — in a realm that I would, for simplicity's sake, describe as metaphysical. Although they may fail to realise this, human beings — the only creatures who are fully aware of their own being and of their mortality, and who perceive their surroundings as a world and have an inner relationship to that world — derive their dignity, as well as their responsibility, from the world as a whole; that is, from that in which they see the world's central theme, its backbone, its order, its direction, its essence, its soul — name it as you will. Christians put this quite simply: Man is here in the image of God.

The world has markedly changed in the past 50 years. There are many more of us on this planet now; the colonial system has fallen apart; the bipolar division is gone; globalisation is advancing at a dizzying pace. The Euro-American culture that largely moulded the character of our present civilisation is no longer the predominant. We are entering an era of multi-culturalism. While the world is now enveloped by one single global civilisation, this civilisation is based on coexistence of many cultures, religions or spheres of civilisation that are equal, and equally powerful.

These different worlds naturally have their different historical, spiritual, political and moral traditions. More and more often, we have witnessed clashes between these traditions and the human rights notion embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Many times, an alleged contradiction has simply served as an ignoble pretext for various autocrats who have sought to legitimate their evil actions by pointing out the "otherness" of their cultures. On other occasions, however, the incongruity is real, and the various standards developed by the Euro-American world are truly perceived in all sincerity as an alien creation that can perhaps be respected, but not

inwardly embraced. Moreover, some find this creation much too secular, much too mundane, much too material, claiming that it fails to pay regard to the higher authority that is the only source of all moral imperatives and all the rights that are derived from these imperatives, or safeguards by them. This is not quite correct: The Western human rights standards are, in fact, a modern application of the Christian principles. Seen from the outside, however, this does not appear to be so — and things might be even worse if it was seen that way, because then it might well be regarded as a religious imperialism under a civil cloak.

What can be done in this situation?

Certainly there are a thousand avenues. In the sphere we are dealing with today, I see one viable course in placing emphasis on the spiritual source of human rights. This is something that will not make these rights an alien phenomenon for the non-European or non-American worlds, on the contrary: It may bring them closer to these realms. First and foremost, however, it may bring them closer to us who come from the Euro-American environment, for we seem to be the ones who are most inclined to lose sight of the spiritual dimension of the values we believe in, and of the metaphysical origin of the rights we claim; and to regard documents like the Declaration of Human Rights simply as some kind of a good business.

Most importantly, the primeval foundations of all the main religious systems of the world contain, in different forms, the same basic principles, and the same moral imperatives. The various religions differ tremendously in accentuation, in spirit, in character and in liturgy, but somewhere deep down we always find the same fundament — the same call for humility before that which is around us and above us, for decency and for solidarity; the same reference to the memory of the universe where all our actions are proven for their true worth; the same emphasis on our responsibility for the whole world.

I do not think that the United Nations, today, could ratify a document whose significance would match that of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I could see that for myself during the preparations of the Anniversary Summit, when attempts were made behind the scenes with a view to adopting a concise document of a declaratory nature that would respond, in a fundamental way, to the changes in the world in the past 50 years. Taking part in the preparations, I soon realised how difficult it was to reach agreement on anything. Not that nobody agreed to the proposed texts, but many were concerned about who wrote them, and whether the authors were not people whom they should oppose; while others waited to have something added or deleted for reasons of sheer prestige. As a result of this — not surprisingly — no document was produced in the end. Nevertheless, I still believe that those of us who want to could make an effort to highlight the spiritual dimension and spiritual origin of the values guarded by the United Nations, and to translate this also into the organisation's practical activities. If a better future for this world lies in the realm of spirit, of moral order, and of a renewed sense of responsibility for this world, who but the United Nations should be the one to restate this again and again?

Much has been said about reform of the organisation. I shall conclude with a few general remarks, which may sound rather unrealistic at present, but I still feel that I should share them because I am deeply convinced that they could enrich the endeavours of this unique and tremendously important institution

in the future.

I have already mentioned the first point: I would deem it advisable if the United Nations became the scene of a quest for a common denominator of spiritual values uniting the different cultures of our present world. The U.N. should look for ways in which the entire system that is aimed to foster human rights, and all the other rights and responsibilities shared by humanity today, could be more deeply implanted in this spiritual foundation.

Second: I think that the United Nations and the various U.N. agencies, committees and commissions should, in an increasing measure, instill their efforts with a systematic concern for human rights. All their actions should be rooted in, related to, or derived from, the concept of human rights. This might, perhaps, create a climate in which there would not be so much particularism, so much indifference, so much tolerance for obvious evil, motivated by egoism or by economic or geopolitical interests. To my mind, the biggest problem of today's multipolar world — a world which has witnessed a reawakening of hundreds of atavistic national interests — does not lie in evil as such, but in tolerance for evil. To give just one example: let us remember how long it took before Europe was able to stop the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina! And who knows whether that war would not have continued to this day had the United States not intervened!

The third remark that I shall make is certainly not new: It is necessary to debureaucratise and decentralise all of the U.N. bodies, institutions and procedures and achieve, thus, substantial cuts in the organisation's budget.

Fourth: The United Nations should give thought to the structure of the Security Council, difficult as it may be. In many respects, the present council is but a relic of post-war circumstances. I envision a Security Council with a permanent presence of states that have the largest populations, wield the greatest influence and are best equipped to represent the various continents of this world and spheres of its civilisation. Integrated regions, such as Europe, might well be represented by one common representative. And I also envision much more flexible decision-making if, for example, the right of veto would be applicable only when exercised by at least two permanent members.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I think that the United Nations should do everything in its power in order that people should perceive it as their very own organisation, not just as a club of their governments. Undoubtedly, this perception could be enhanced in a number of different ways. For example, people could pay the United Nations directly, with the government authorities of their countries just transferring the funds to their destination. Contributions to the U.N. would then be contributions of all the inhabitants of this planet, not of governments. It would be marvellous if every man and woman knew that the United Nations is their organisation, even if they paid no more than one millionth of their annual incomes.

I know of the broad-minded reform concept which [Secretary General Kofi Annan] has prepared for the United Nations, and I fully support it. Nevertheless, I have also wanted to offer, on this occasion, a few suggestions — perhaps somewhat utopian — of my own.

It is my wish that the United Nations succeeds and thrives. It is my hope that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose birth we are commemorating, will not be just a dream about what humanity's position should be like in this world. May it gradually turn, in all countries, into a living reality.

37 firms, unions and banks to boycott talks on savings funds provisional law

(Continued from page 1)

participants that the draft law was "upon instructions of the International Monetary Fund."

"The government has to clarify the situation," Mr. Khirfan said. "It should clarify why such law was proposed and what are the real reasons behind it. We cannot agree on such a law."

Deputy director general of the Jerusalem Insurance Company, Yassin Kayid, said that the government's objective behind the project was "to control the professional unions by controlling their financial sources."

The professional unions, which maintains the lion's share of the savings funds, are severe critics of the government's peace policy with Israel and usually spearheads anti-government campaigns.

"What the government says worries us, makes our fears justified and prompts us never to trust it," Mr. Kayid added.

Others speakers who took part in the discussion also criticised the government's proposed law and called for unifying ranks against the draft

law. Meanwhile, the daily turnover at the Amman Financial Market (AFM) has registered a remarkable increase in Tuesday's trading following the sale of JD11.7 million worth of Arab Bank shares in a serious move to liquidate the bank's saving fund.

Brokers at the AFM said that the total turnover on Tuesday amounted to JD12.4 million compared with JD763,557 on Monday.

Earlier this month, the Arab Bank decided to dissolve its saving fund to protect the rights and savings of its employees on fear of a surprise government move to enact the law. A high percentage of the bank's saving fund, which amounts to JD30 million, is invested in shares.

The Arab Bank's sale was a very serious blow to the government draft law, which will induce other firms, banks and professional unions to dissolve their saving funds.

Abdul Mutaleb Abu Hijleh, a senior broker at the AFM, said that Arab Bank has sold 34,960 shares Tuesday at rates ranging from JD335 to

JD340 through two major contracts.

He said that the transfer was from the Arab Bank's saving fund to a "non-Jordanian buyer whose identity was not known."

Naim Nageeb, another broker, said that rumours in the stock market indicated that the transfer of the Arab Bank shares were "for a Saudi investor."

Other brokers said that the shares were bought by Arab Bank Chairman Abdul Majeed Shoman and not by "foreign investors."

"If other companies decide to dissolve their funds and sell their share at the AFM, this means more supply of shares bringing down prices if demand does not pick up," Mr. Abu Hijleh told the Jordan Times.

"If such a trend prevails, it will lead to more losses in the market," he added.

"The Arab Bank was lucky to find some parties that were ready to buy its shares. Other saving funds which hold shares might not find the same luck," he added.

"The AFM already suffers from lack of liquidity which hampers the investments in the mar-

ket. Additional sales will put more weight and double our difficulties," said Mr. Abu Hijleh.

Mr. Nageeb said that it will be a "national disaster" if most of the private sector firms decide to dissolve their saving funds.

"If each person gets his savings, he or she will resort to spending them rather than directing them to investment purposes," he said.

"Despite government assurances, people are still worried and will not be satisfied before the government clarifies everything," Mr. Nageeb said.

troop withdrawal from the West Bank Tuesday by saying the land in question was empty of Palestinians "but full of security implications" for Israel.

"The Palestinian Authority controls the area containing 98 per cent of the Palestinian West Bank population," Mr. Netanyahu asserted.

"So the territory we're dealing with is empty of

Crown Prince calls for backing to revive Jordan's badia region

(Continued from page 1)

Jordan's "overwhelming desire is to resurrect the badia and render it a life-sustaining environment for man and livestock, as it was for many centuries before the advent of modernity, while at the same time conserving its enormous appeal as a place of natural beauty and peace."

Prince Hassan announced that the headquarters of the programme, the Safawi Field Centre, around 150 kilometres north-east of Amman, was promoted from a "programme" to a "centre" to help boost research activity.

"The new Badia centre is clearly poised for an accelerated burst of research activity, in which we hope that Jordanians and British will continue to work harmoniously for the benefit of the region and its people."

Prince Hassan, is accompanied by Her Royal Highness Princess Sarvath, Minister of Industry and Trade, Hani Mulki, Minister of Tourism, Aqel Bilalji and other officials.

Earlier Monday, Prince Hassan and the Duke of Kent visited an exhibition entitled "The Badia Comes to London — A Celebration of Culture, Heritage and Art" at the RGS headquarters in central London.

The March 16-27 exhibition features Bedouin woolen rugs, silver jewellery and other traditional handicrafts.

The two later attended a lecture that was given by JBRDP Director Mohammad Shahbaz and his British counterpart, Roderick Dutton at the RGS. Both outlined the programme's achievements and its future plans to develop the region.

Dr. Shahbaz said the JBRDP

will be promoted to a national centre affiliated to the HCST, with a mandate covering all the badia region.

Dr. Dutton reviewed the impact of recent natural and economic developments in the badia on the lives of the 16,000 families inhabiting the region.

He said the lifting of state subsidies on livestock feed — wheat and barley — which could be considered by many as a negative move in the short-term, will show positive results in the long-term.

Sharifa Zein Bint Nasser, public relations director for the JBRDP, termed as successful the "U.K. Appeal 1998."

She told the Jordan Times on Tuesday that the financial and moral support that the project received here encouraged the launching of similar initiatives in other countries in the future.

"We have fulfilled both our goals: informing the British

and Arab public about the badia project, and receiving a big push forward, both morally and financially," she said.

Through the exhibition, the JBRDP also hopes to underscore the role of women in the badia.

"We are planning to allocate one seat in the programme's council for bedouin women, to acknowledge and boost their traditional role in decision-making," Sharifa Zein said.

The badia programme aims at linking the region's economics with that of Jordan's development and improving living standards of citizens residing in 35 communities who heavily rely on pastoral activities to earn a living.

It concentrates its efforts on scientific research to identify a model useful in the development of and investment in the badia.

Annan appeals for peace on last leg of Mideast tour

(Continued from page 1)

Palestinians but full of security implications for Israel," he said, referring to the four-point difference between the U.S. and Israeli proposals.

"We have a very, very deep attachment to this land, to every rock and every tree," Mr. Netanyahu said.

"It's not easy to redeploy from this land... and yet we are committed to the (Oslo peace) agreement signed by our predecessors" that calls

for trading land for peace, he said.

Mr. Annan responded quickly that "the Palestinians say the same thing about an attachment to the land for thousands of years."

Mr. Annan also criticised Mr. Netanyahu's policy of expanding Jewish settlements in occupied areas, saying, "We need to avoid actions that seem to affect the facts on the ground."

On the Lebanon issue, Mr. Netanyahu said he expected

his government to approve next week a plan to implement a 20-year-old U.N. Security Council Resolution calling for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the neighbouring state.

"We hope we finish the discussions in the cabinet next week... and then I hope we will formally accept Resolution 425 for the first time since we were forced to go into Lebanon," he said.

Mr. Netanyahu's proposal

conditions a withdrawal from the buffer zone Israel occupies in south Lebanon on the Beirut government taking effective control of the area and preventing cross-border guerrilla attacks.

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EU to back 11 for EMU Arab economists open conference in Amman

BRUSSELS (R) — The European Commission in one of two key reports to be issued on Wednesday will recommend that 11 European Union (EU) member states launch monetary union in 1999 despite risks expected to be highlighted by central bankers.

"Eleven countries will be considered as respecting the Maastricht convergence criteria," a Commission source said. The selected group of countries is: Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain.

The Commission recommendations will not cover Britain and Denmark, which have opted out of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), another EU source said.

Sweden, which decided last year not to join EMU from the start even though it has no formal opt-out, will be covered as will Greece, which has already said it will not be ready to join until 2001.

The likely euphoria of those considered until recently as EMU outsiders, such as Italy, will be tempered by a report to be released simultaneously by the European Monetary Institute (EMI), the forerunner to Europe's planned central bank, and later by other central banks.

Neither the EMI nor its constituent central banks can veto the participation of any of the countries wanting to join.

But they could have a big influence on the European Parliament and national assemblies that have to be consulted on the Commission's recommendations before a summit of EU leaders in May to decide the EMU starting line up.

The EMI will use its convergence report to issue a delicately worded critique of problems like high debt levels in the euro

zone, one monetary source said. Reports from the Dutch central bank and German Bundesbank, to be published in time for cabinet meetings on Friday, are expected to do the same.

However, neither the EMI nor the banks are expected to rock the boat.

"EMI President (Wim) Duisenberg said long ago that the final choice will rest with the politicians," U.S. bank Merrill Lynch said in a report last week.

German government coalition sources said on Tuesday they did not see the Bundesbank objecting to a broad, 11 member EMU start.

Bonn said Chancellor Helmut Kohl would comment on the Commission and EMI reports on Wednesday — half an hour after their publication and before separate news conferences from the EMI and Commission.

With the list of EMU starters settled, analysts said the most important part of the reports would be their accompanying economic analyses and new growth and inflation forecasts covering 1998 and 1999 due to be released by the Commission.

The Commission will also release forecasts for the likely EMU area, a source said. If these pointed to a mismatch between economies of the kind that could cause problems for monetary policy in the run-up to EMU, or after its launch, they could re-kindle talk of a last-time revaluation of some currencies, analysts said.

"For me the important thing is what they say about price and cost competitiveness and to what extent they judge the fixed exchange rates sustainable," said Peter Praet, chief economist at Generale Bank in Brussels.

The report's comments on

membership of the exchange rate mechanism (ERM), part of the criteria on exchange rate stability, will also be important.

Sweden's stance on unilaterally putting off EMU membership without a formal opt-out, puts the bloc in a tricky legal position because Stockholm meets all the other EMU criteria.

The lack of ERM membership would provide a handy excuse for the Commission to exclude Sweden, putting pressure on both it and Britain to join the grid later, before entering EMU. Britain and Sweden are alone in not belonging to the ERM.

Arab economists open conference in Amman

AMMAN (Petra) — Former Prime Minister Taher Masri Tuesday said economic integration and common endeavours are vital if the Arab World is to cope with international political and economic developments.

Addressing the opening session of the 12th Conference of the Arab Economists Federation (AEF), Mr. Masri stressed the need for carrying out political, social and economic reforms to enable Arab

countries to develop their economies and improve the living conditions of their citizens.

Applied Sciences University (ASU) President Sulaiman Arabiyat said trade exchange among Arab countries is much below expectations as it is less than seven per cent of the total commercial exchange.

He attributed this to the troubled and sometimes strained political relations, narrow interests and inter-Arab differences which

governed the formation of economic Arab blocs.

Dr. Arabiyat indicated that Arab countries import \$13 billion worth of strategic commodities, mostly wheat, at a time when they can ensure food security given the available resources they have.

Other speakers stressed the need to come up with recommendations to enhance economic Arab relations and address major economic issues in the Arab World.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You tend to favour the scientific approach rather than the emotional. If there's an argument between these two, that's the side you would be on — but it's not necessarily the winning side. In fact, it looks like they're evenly matched. So listen to both and maybe act as referee. You're good at that, and you'll learn a lot.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) People are trying to tell you what to do. Most of the time, you manage to get along just fine without their input. That might not be an option today, however. It looks like a person who's trying to change your life is in a position to do so. Instead of putting up a fuss, just wait. You could have the last laugh after all.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You're stronger, more confident and decisive, able to concentrate on the work at hand. Are visitors coming over tonight? You'd probably better be prepared just in case. Your spouse could be bringing the boss home for dinner. Go pick up something gourmet, which you can pretend you cooked.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) The very thing you least want to get involved with could be the key to your success. It's like having to learn to type so you can get a job, so you can buy a new car. In that case, learning to type equals a new car. It's that sort of situation you'll find yourself in today. Might as well relax and enjoy it.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You'll do well in a financial deal if you're working with a partner. It could involve a legal settlement. If you're thinking a lawsuit, it's a good day to start proceedings. The matter will be judged fairly, but the person who's doing the judging is a rather generous mood. This will be true of any sort of arbitration.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) First thing this morning, a problem could cause you to rethink the situation. You may have to go back to the drawing board. Just take it one step at a time. If it's necessary to call in an expert, go ahead. Don't waste your own time on something that's making you crazy, if somebody else is would enjoy it.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You're exceptionally intelligent today, and also lucky. There could be a breakdown at work around the middle of the day. By pulling strings behind the scenes, you can fix it. You may have to go to the manual to find out how this mechanism operates. Call an expert if necessary. You're so cute, you can probably get one to help you for free.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) The focus today is on domestic matters. Is there something around your house that needs fixing or rearranging? If so, it will float to the surface today. You'll want to put in the correction, and quickly. Later in the week, the conditions will be absolutely marvellous for romance, so spend a little time right now setting the scene.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You're pushed right now to make changes at home. With all the other conditions that are in effect right now, it looks like those changes will be positive ones. So while it may be a little disruptive for a while, the end will be worth the means.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Now there's an emphasis on money. Unfortunately, it's going out. Today starts out with an unpleasant surprise. It's a bill you forgot to pay or a fee coming due. An idea will pop into your brain in the early afternoon. It's the most creative, inventive, unusual, and workable solution. Don't act until you've found it.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Either a friend is messing with your money or a project is draining your resources. You want to help, but you're running a little thin. You'll have the confidence and the information you need to make a tough decision around the middle of the day. Don't let yourself be talked into anything before then.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) It seems like there's more to do than one person can handle. Find someone who can help you get organized or take over some of your chores. This is not necessarily your mate, but your mate could help. You tend to keep your ideas to yourself, but today you're going to have let other people help you turn them into reality. Go for it.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

Semi Attached villa 3 bedrooms, 340sqm. Behind C Town and 3 bed rooms Apt. in Shmesani 350 sqm.
Tel. No. 07970050-4642229- 5667684

British Airways Holds Workshop for Cargo Agents

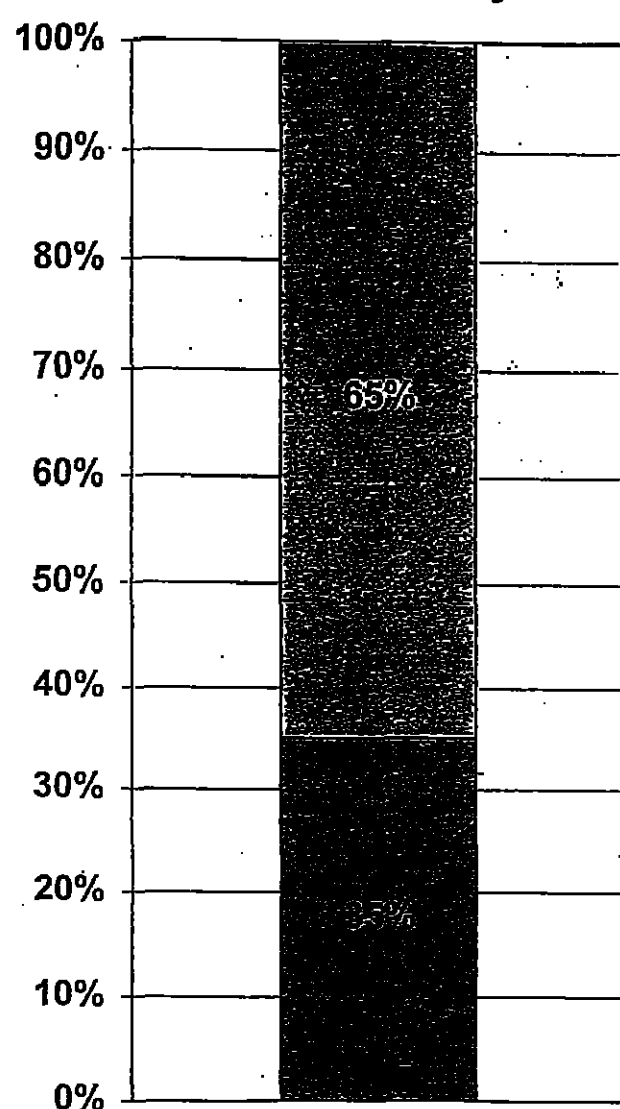
BRITISH AIRWAYS held a special workshop at the Amman Marriott Hotel entitled "Vision Roll Out to GHA/Agents on New World Cargo Centre," attended by senior officials from Royal Jordanian as well as air-cargo agents in the Kingdom.

Mr. Wa'el Sawalha, marketing and service delivery executive, said that "this workshop intends to introduce the local transport companies and shipping agents to the new and improved services of British Airways World Cargo, which will come into effect later this year."

These projects for British Airways World Cargo, at London Heathrow Airport, are reported to cost more than 250 million pounds sterling, and are sure to leave clients with a very positive impression of the airline, as well as heightening the standard of services of British Airways World Cargo on a global level.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET												
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHARJAH												
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179												
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 24/03/1998												
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	PAST 12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRAMS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE		
346.000	250.000	ARAB BANK	13.8	1.18	28	34960	11720960	337.50	338.50	1.00	+	
2.340	1.660	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	8	0.00	17	22000	36623	1.66	1.67	0.01	+	
S	3.100	CAIRO AMMAN BANK	6.4	4.84	1	10000	31000	3.10	3.10	-	-	
S	3.000	CAIRO AMMAN BANK/NEW	E	0.00	1	5000	15000	3.00	3.00	-	-	
+S	1.840	1.320	BANK OF JORDAN	4.1	0.00	1	250	325	1.32	1.30	-0.02	-
S	2.680	1.650	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	10.3	6.07	1	1000	1720	1.72	1.72	-	-
S	5.300	4.660	THE HOUSING BK.	29.5	1.97	7	11300	55706	4.91	4.93	0.02	+
	.920	.620	JOR. GULF BANK	3.8	10.94	2	2000	1280	1.64	1.64	-	-
+S	4.190	2.810	ARAB JOR. INV. BK.	20.2	0.00	3	3075	8610	2.81	2.80	-0.01	-
N	2.700	2.700	ARAB JOR. INV. BK./NEW	0	0.00	3	1025	2768	2.70	2.70	-	-
S	4.020	1.960	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	10.1	4.85	9	3500	6950	1.99	1.98	-0.01	-
	1.400	1.400	BEIT-AL-DAL (BEITRA)	5	17.05	5	1250	1100	1.88	1.88	-	-
BANK SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 234.33 %CHG: +0.27 78 95360 11881941												
2.400	1.590	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	5.5	12.63	2	800	1569	1.98	1.98	-	-	
S	2.300	1.200	HOLY LAND INSUR.	6.4	0.00	1	2000	2500	1.25	1.25	-	-
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 121.73 %CHG: 0.00 3 2800 4069												
2.140	1.550	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	9.9	4.85	7	1876	3886	2.02	2.06	0.04	+	
4.030	1.320	IRSID ELECTRICITY	12.5	5.48	2	150	314	2.07	2.10	0.03	+	
1.550	0.930	NATL. PORTFOLIO	42.3	0.00	36	24750	26246	1.05	1.06	0.01	+	
1.120	0.950	REAL ESTATE INV.	13.2	6.32	2	200	190	0.95	0.95	-	-	
	.590	.370	JORDAN INTL. TRAD.	20.5	0.00	3	1350	540	0.38	0.40	0.02	+
T	9.350	6.700	ALBA	9.7	6.32	3	250	2375	9.35	9.50	0.15	+
1.480	1.130	MID. EAST HOTELS	17.4	0.00	2	283	320	1.13	1.14	0.01	+	
4.600	2.890	ARAB INTL. TRV. EDUC.	10.6	1.86	11	2650	1652	4.34	4.29	-0.05	-	
1.090	0.900	SARKA EDUCATION	9	0.00	4	4650	4412	0.92	0.95	0.03	+	
1.820	1.560	UNIFIED CO.	6.9	7.10	7	2150	3340	1.56	1.55	-0.01	-	
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 119.36 %CHG: +0.32 77 38309 53045												
4.480	2.690	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	18.6	3.99	12	15362	62420	2.75	2.76	0.01	+	
7.050	5.620	ARAB POTASH CO.	14.1	3.31	12	10850	60979	5.80	5.78	-0.02	-	
11.160	9.200	JOR. PETRO. REFINERY	10.3	8.39	16	3410	36143	10.55	10.60	0.05	+	
2.480	1.100	INDUSTRIAL COMM. AGR.	9	0.00	10	7495	9063	1.15	1.21	0.06	+	
5.700	3.440	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	14.1	3.90	21	6550	33792	5.15	5.13	-0.02	-	
4.750	4.510	JOR. PRINT & PACK.	9	0.00	1	1500	642	4.51	4.28	-0.23	-	
1.530	1.020	JOR. PIPES MANCT.	14.9	6.67	5	4350	5220	1.20	1.20	-	-	
S	1.420	0.780	RAFI INDUSTRIES	9	0.00	1	2000	1640	1.82	1.82	-	-
3.460	2.220	ARAB ALUM. IND.	6.6	8.93	2	600	1680	2.75	2.80	0.05	+	
5.580	4.00	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	10.4	0.00	19	24600	12054	0.49	0.49	-	-	
1.100	0.620	NATIONAL STEEL IND.	9	0.00	1	500	310	0.62	0.62	-	-	
9.600	5.10	NATIONAL IND.	9	0.00	3	1250	688	0.55	0.55	-	-	
9.900	3.70	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	8	7000	2940	0.42	0.42	-	-	
5.830	4.370	JOR. CHEM. IND.	23.8	3.43	1	3250	18948	4.81	4.81	-	-	
7.90	5.30	JOR. SULPHO-CHEM	9	0.00	8	8500	5100	0.60	0.60	-	-	
1.560	1.150	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	17.2	5.19	14	9750	13131	1.32	1.35	0.03	+	
S	1.670	0.810	UNIV. WOOD. IND.	16.3	5.88	51	38650	39488	1.01	1.02	0.01	+
1.080	0.810	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	16.7	0.00	42	58750	59678	1.02	1.02	-	-	
1.880	1.290	ELI - ZAY READY WEAR	47.2	0.00	6	4000	5340	1.33	1.34	0.01	+	
1.250	1.080	INTL. TOBACCO	6.5	0.00	3	1300	1532	1.18	1.18	-	-	
1.220	0.860	UNION CH. & VEG.	46.8	0.00	29	49750	51180	1.02	1.03	0.01	+	
0.850	0.60	JORDAN STEEL	36.6	6.17	11	12685	42674	0.81	0.81	-	-	
0.820	0.570	MID-EAST COMPLEX	7.8	15.87	17	52400	32918	0.62	0.63	0.01	+	
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 109.97 %CHG: +0.01 309 395889 499359												
GRAND TOTAL INDEX: 167.32 %CHG: +0.18 467 53258 12438413												
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 24/03/1998												
N 1.050	0.910	EXPORT & FIN. BNC. 754	17.0	0.00	8	35947	26124	0.93	0.92	-0.01	-	
N 1.530	0.940	JOR. TRADE PAC	9	0.00	17	21750	8483	0.39	0.39	-	-	
N 0.800	0.660	UNION INV. 50%	9	0.00	33	137647	32802	0.74	0.74	-	-	
N 0.620	0.360	ARAB FIN. INVEST.	9	0.00	30	77524	37144	0.48	0.48	-	-	
N 0.780	0.610	AL-DAMRIAN 754	65.3	0.00	5	40000	17200	0.67	0.68	0.01	+	
N 2.220	1.050	CENTURY INV. GROUP	E	0.00	4	40000	80000	2.00	2.00	-	-	
N 1.000	0.850	ARAB JOR. INVEST. CO.	17.0	0.00	1	10000	10000	1.00	1.00	-	-	
N 1.290	0.750	JOR. IND. INVEST-VEZCO	9	0.00	1	100	12	0.13	0.13	-	-	
N 0.640	0.370	ARAB FOOD & MED.	9	0.00	4	3250	1560	0.49	0.48	-0.01	-	
N 0.470	0.240	ARAB INTL. TRV. IND.	43.8	0.00	25	74000	27670	0.37	0.38	0.01	+	
N 0.530	0.280	NATL. TEXTILE	9	0.00	1	500	170	0.36	0.36	-	-	
N 1.230	0.890	READY MIX CONCRETE	12.7	0.00	33	76250	29198	0.38	0.39	0.01	+	
N 0.600	0.310	KAYAK DIES & MOULDS	9	0.00	3	400	183	0.39	0.37	-0.02	-	
N 0.730	0.460	RAFI PHARM.	E	0.00	5	5750	4093	0.72	0.71	-0.01	-	
N 0.830	0.240	INDOS. ENG.	9	0.00	11	23800	6902	0.30	0.29	-0.01	-	
N 0.950	0.480	INDOS. CERAMIC	13.9	0.00	8	16750	8878	0.53	0.53	-	-	
N 0.980	0.480	ADVANCED CH. & VEG. IND.	E	0.00	9	13000	2113	0.44	0.44	-	-	
N 0.740	0.480	NATL. POULTRY	E	0.00	3	1250	3672	0.48	0.48	-	-	
N 0.950	0.470	OPTICAL BEARING 754	E	0.00	3	1250	438	0.40	0.40	-	-	
N 1.000	0.600	NATL. ALUMINUM 754	93.2	0.00	10	9750	4150	0.77	0.77	-	-	
N 1.100	0.720	ARAB INT. FOOD FACT.	5.9	0.00	2	1303	1303	1.00	1.00	-	-	
N 1.310	1.000	MUTRIBAD	P	0.00	1	250	263	1.05	1.05	-	-	
N 1.000	0.750	KERBAL PRINT CO. 754	13.5	8.51	13	35000	22400	0.89	0.89	-	-	
GRAND TOTAL 229 643071 345841												

U.S. Requirement for Product Content for Duty-Free Entry



65%: From U.S. or anywhere in world

35%: Any combination of input from Jordan QIZ, the West Bank/Gaza, and Israel

Six Jordanian industries seen likely to win immediate eligibility U.S. will look favourably into any request for sub-QIZs in Jordan — Grappo

By Samir Ghawi
Jordan Times Economic Editor

AMMAN — U.S. Embassy Economic Counsellor Gary Grappo told a group of Jordanian exporters Tuesday evening that the U.S. government would favourably look into any request for a sub-QIZ in Jordan if any industrial entity met eligibility requirements.

He was answering a question by an industrialist who has his factory in Zarqa and was eager to take advantage of exporting duty-free suits to the U.S. market under the QIZ (Qualifying Industrial Zones) criteria for firms established at Al Hassan Industrial Estate in Irbid.

Mr. Grappo had said in a recent lecture that there could be many QIZs in Jordan but in his lecture Tuesday evening, he indicated that sub-QIZs could also be a possibility.

He explained that a sub-QIZ could be a single plant anywhere in Jordan abiding by the criteria specified for such a status and approved

by a joint Jordanian-Israeli technical committee examining the eligibility of firms. The committee is expected to meet for the first time on Sunday and Mr. Grappo expected six Jordanian industries to immediately be qualified for QIZ status. He saw the number rising to 12 firms by the end of 1998, but declined to estimate the volume or the value of products exported under the QIZ arrangement.

Asked why won't the U.S. negotiate a free trade agreement with Jordan similar to the one the U.S. has with Israel, Mr. Grappo explained that a free trade agreement requires a monumental commitment to eliminate all tariffs and other trade barriers. "Jordan would need to make a number of changes to its trade regime before it would be ready to begin discussion of a free trade agreement," he said noting such a process would take a long time even on the part of the U.S. where

the Congress has a big say in such a matter.

Accordingly, Mr. Grappo highlighted the QIZ as being really exceptional, extraordinary and the first such facility extended by the U.S. to any country in the world and urged Jordanians to utilise its benefits and advantages especially when they are not reciprocal.

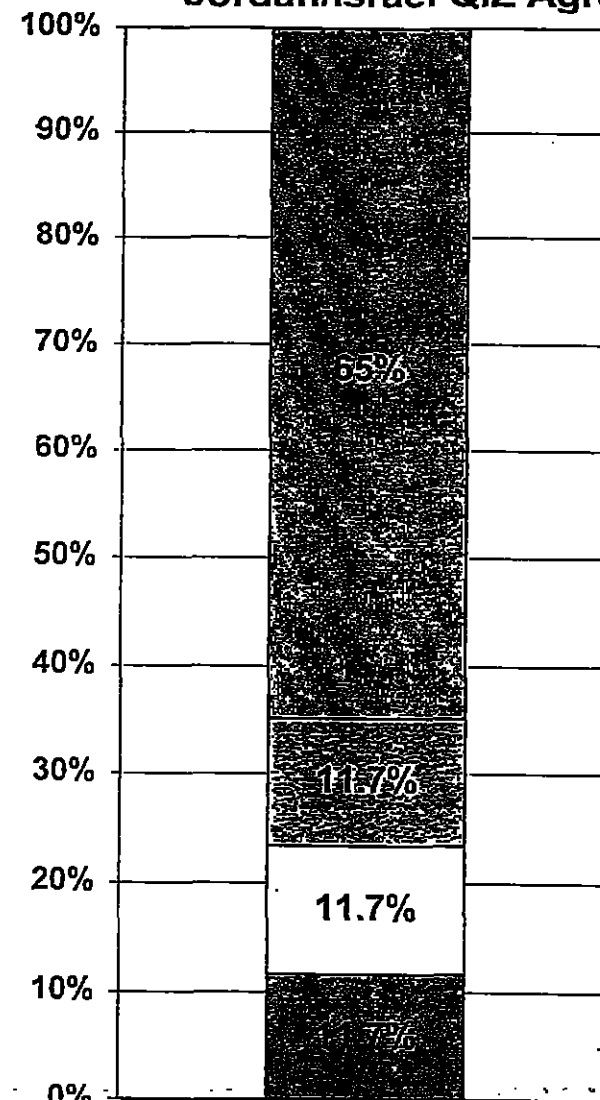
The economic counsellor

expected the QIZ arrangement to attract large foreign investments to Jordan from various parts of the world and pointed out that although the Al Hassan Industrial Estate was officially designated as a QIZ only on March 6, 1998, the Jordanian government has started preparing to promote the facility as a way to build on the incentives already

being offered for Arab and foreign investors.

Asked whether input obtained from the U.S. would give extra advantage to products manufactured at the QIZ, Mr. Grappo said the U.S. would be willing to accept 25 per cent instead of the 35 per cent required as input from Jordan's QIZ, Israel and the West Bank/Gaza.

Product Content Requirements of Jordan/Israel QIZ Agreement



65% - From the U.S. or anywhere in the world

11.7% - Any combination of input from a Jordanian QIZ, Israel, and the West Bank/Gaza

11.7% - From Israel

REUTERS The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates Prices as at 24/03/98 17:45									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	1.0000	1.8284	0.5971	1.4885	130.18	1.4191	1799.04	2.0586	6.1211
DE Mark	0.5475	1.0000	0.3266	0.8149	71.27	0.7765	984.53	1.1269	3.3521
GB Sterling	1.5748	3.0594	1.0000	2.4821	218.03	2.3767	3011.50	3.4463	10.2467
CH Franc	0.6719	1.2263	0.4009	1.0000	67.43	0.9528	1207.65	138.20	4.1089
JP Yen	0.0077	1.4024	0.4562	1.1429	1.0000	1.0897	13.91	158.02	4.7008
CA Dollar	0.7047	1.2873	0.4208	1.0490	1.09	1.0000	1287.74	1.4506	4.3146
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0147	0.3315	0.8627	1383.70	0.7884	1.0000	11.44	3.4008
NL Guilder	0.4668	0.8471	0.2898	0.7236	63.21	0.6892	97.28	1.0000	2.9729
FR Franc	0.1634	0.2983	0.0974	0.2406	21.24	0.2313	33.64	33.6100	1.0000

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	1.0000	0.7090	3.7506	0.3770	3.6395	0.3053	3.6727	1527.50	3.4000
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	1.0000	5.2900	0.5317	5.1333	0.4305	5.1801	2164.44	4.7955
Saudi Riyal	0.2686	0.1390	1.0000	0.1005	0.97	0.0814	0.98	407.27	0.9065
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8806	9.9455	1.0000	9.65	0.8097	9.74	4081.72	9.0186
Qatar Dinar	0.2748	0.1948	1.0305	1.0305	1.0000	0.0839	1.01	419.70	0.9342
Kuwait Dinar	3.2760	2.3227	12.2870	1.2351	11.92	1.0000	12.03	5004.10	0.9342
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.0212	1.0128	0.9910	0.0831	1.00	415.91	0.9257
Lebanese/1000	0.65	0.4642	2.4554	0.2468	2.3827	0.1998	2.4044	1.0000	2.2259
Egyptian	0.2941	0.2085	1.1031	0.1108	1.0704	0.0898	1.0002	448.26	1.0000

Energy		
Oil	Last	Review
Brent	14.39	14.69
W. Texas	15.92	16.10
Bonny	14.39	14.69
Dubai	12.53	12.60
UL Gas	158.00	151.00

Mid-East Currencies						
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	
SA Riyal	0.2686	0.4872	0.1592	0.3971	34.7248	
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.4974	0.1628	0.4063	35.4585	
KW Dinar	3.2760	5.8444	1.9518	4.8804	426.621	
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.8448	1.5840	3.9510	345.423	
CY Pound	1.872	3.4194	1.1174	2.7884	243.71	

JOD Cross Rates		
Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
GB Sterling	1.1857	1.1916
DE Mark	0.3872	0.3891
CH Franc	0.4748	0.4773
FR Franc	0.1155	0.1161
JP Yen	0.5442	0.5468
NL Guilder	0.3437	0.3454
IT Lira	0.3932	0.3962

Libor Fixing				
Period	1-3	3-6	6-12	1-12
Currency	Month	Months	Months	Year
USD	5.7109	5.7266	5.7500	5.8616
GBP	7.4896	7.5673	7.5625	7.5625
JPY	0.8854	0.7708	0.7500	0.7282
DEM	3.6250	3.6563	3.7188	3.8516
FRF	3.5195	1.3828	1.4688	1.6328
CHF	1.3359	3.5781	3.6738	3.8438
ITL	5.6200	5.3540	4.9920	-

Main Equity Indices						
Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low
New York	DOW JONES	8863.58	47.33	0.54	8879.28	8817.5
New York	S&P 500	1100.1	4.55	0.42	1101.46	1095.55
London	FT-SE 100	5974.6	27.8	0.46	5978.5	5941.1
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	16008.39	-252.44	-1.56	16078.5	15850.3
Paris	CAC 40	3728.92	48.78	1.27	3745.91	3688.3
Frankfurt	DAX	8028.24	65.92	1.14	8031.7	8007.07

Fact sheet on 'Qualifying Industrial Zones' (QIZs)

The QIZ Concept

The United States proposed the concept of QIZs in President Clinton's Proclamation No. 6955 of November 1996. That proclamation extends duty free status to "products of the West Bank, Gaza and Qualifying Industrial Zones." The QIZ represents an unprecedented opportunity to gain duty-free access to the U.S. market without the requirement for any reciprocal benefits and is available only to Jordan and Egypt.

The First QIZ

The First Qualifying Industrial Zone (QIZ) designated by the USTR encompasses the Al Hassan Industrial Estate in Irbid, in northern Jordan, and an Israeli customs area at the Sheikh Hussein Bridge.

Duty Free Entry of Products

In order for QIZ products to gain duty-free entry into the U.S., certain requirements set by U.S. law and a Jordanian-Israeli agreement must be met. U.S. law requires that the article be a new and different article of commerce that has been grown, produced or manufactured in the zone, and that at least 35 per cent of the appraised value of a product at the time it enters the U.S. must consist of the cost or value of materials produced and direct cost of producing operations performed in the QIZ. Content from Israel, the West Bank or Gaza can also be included in the 35%. For textiles or apparel produced in the Irbid QIZ, rules of origin set out in section 334 of the Uruguay Round Agreement Act, 19 USC 3592, will apply.

The Jordanian-Israeli agreement establishes a joint committee to identify products of businesses located within the zone which involve "substantial cooperation" between the two countries. The committee may determine that a product involves substantial economic cooperation in one of two ways:

First, of the thirty-five per cent minimum QIZ content, at least one-third (or 11.7 per cent) must be added by the Jordanian manufacturer in the QIZ and one-third by an Israeli manufacturer(s). The remainder of the 35 per cent content may be fulfilled by production in the QIZ, the West Bank, Gaza, Israel or the U.S.

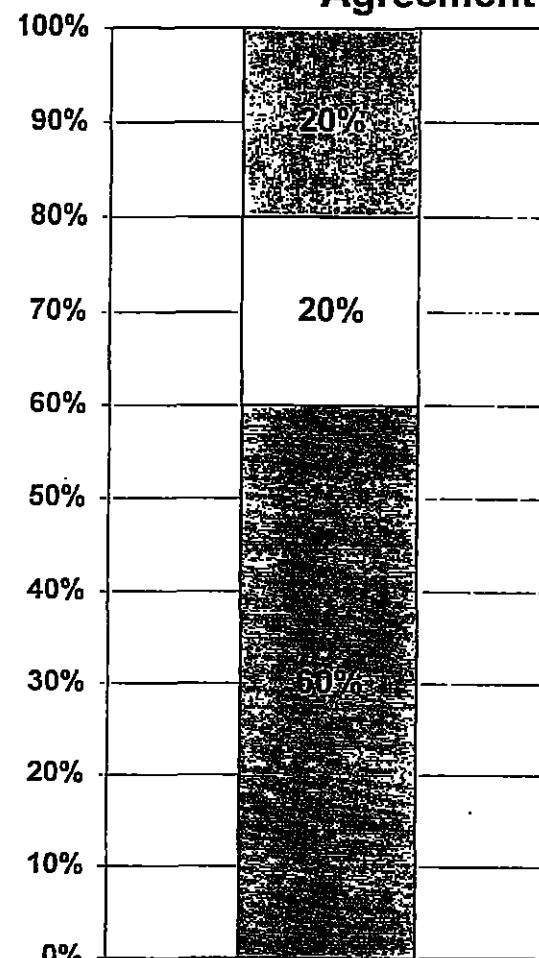
Second, Jordanian and Israeli manufacturers must each maintain at least twenty per cent of the total production cost of the QIZ-produced goods(s).

The joint committee will consist of representatives named by the Jordanian and Israeli governments and an observer from the U.S. If the committee determines that one of the above criteria for substantial economic cooperation is met, it informs U.S. Customs of products and manufacturers eligible for duty-free entry. The joint committee will reconfirm eligibility for duty-free privileges annually, and can suspend a company's eligibility if the committee's requirements are no longer met.

Future QIZ Designations

Although the Irbid QIZ is the only zone to receive this privilege at present, other areas in Jordan and Israel that meet eligibility requirements may be designated in the future.

Production Cost-Sharing Requirement of Jordan/Israel QIZ Agreement



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20% - From an Israeli manufacturer

60% - From anywhere

Production costs may include originating materials, wages and salaries, design, research and development, marketing expenses, etc.

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Owners extend labour deal through 2003

ORLANDO (AFP) — National Football League owners began meetings here Monday by voting to extend their union labour deal through 2003.

Owners voted 28-1 with one abstention to ratify the deal, which needed 23 favourable votes for approval. It keeps in place salary cap and free agency after four years. The union approved the deal last weekend.

Wellington Mara of the New York Giants was the lone owner to vote against ratification, while Oakland's Al Davis abstained. Mara objected to paying a veteran of five or more seasons a full salary if he is cut after the season opens.

The possible return of instant replay will be the hot topic at the meetings. NFL owners will vote for a 10th time on the possible return of instant replay, most likely a plan where failed replay challenges cost clubs a timeout.

A regular season replay system was in place from 1986 to 1991, but was discontinued in 1992.

The NFL will also discuss whether the return of the Cleveland Browns to the NFL next year will be with an expansion team or relocation of an existing club. The Browns became the Baltimore Ravens in 1996.



Pascal Bailis (L) of Montpellier and Mohammad Khakhdour (R) of Iran chase after the ball during early action in their friendly soccer match. Montpellier won 3-0 (Reuters photo)

Injury nightmare haunts Hoddle

BERNE (AFP) — England coach Glenn Hoddle fears injuries could turn his team's World Cup hopes into an "impossible dream".

He arrived in Berne for Wednesday's World Cup warm-up match against the Swiss with only 17 of the 26 players he had originally selected.

"This was the week when we had more preparation time, and I wanted to look forward to the World Cup and work as a squad for the summer," said Hoddle.

But his plans were decimated by Sunday's loss of Tony Adams, Ray Parlour, Nicky Butt, David Beckham and Graeme Le Saux — which followed the earlier withdrawals of Manchester United quartet Gary and Phil Neville, Paul Scholes and Andy Cole.

"I've never known it as bad as this," Hoddle groaned. "It's very annoying and very frustrating to lose the amount of talent we have."

"The only silver lining is that we've still got time to heal the injuries and get people fit and ready for the World Cup."

"But if we were sitting here in May with these problems it would be frightening. It would make our wish to do well an impossible dream."

Hoddle accepts injuries are inevitable given the demands of the season at domestic, European and international level and he attaches no significance to the fact that six United players, and two from Arsenal, have withdrawn.

"Every single one of the injuries is legitimate. They've all had X-rays and scans and every one of them showed up something adverse," said Hoddle.

The gaps in Hoddle's squad will be plugged by the Liverpool pair of Dominic Matteo and Jamie Redknapp after they have

played in Tuesday's under-21 game in Aarau, although there is still a doubt over Achilles tendon victim Andy Hinchcliffe.

More of a worry, though, is the latest recurrence of Adams' long-term back injury, which has cost the Arsenal skipper the chance of his 50th cap.

The absentee will force Hoddle's hand more than he had anticipated against a Swiss side who missed out on World Cup qualification.

"I had some plans in mind for further down the line but because of the personnel changes I'll bring them forward to this game," said Hoddle, perhaps hinting at a central defensive role for Dion Dublin, who made his debut as a striker against Chile last month.

Among those anxious to seize his chance is Liverpool winger Steve McManaman, who has so far failed to shine under Hoddle.

Hoddle said: "This season he's been consistent enough to make me say he's got a chance of making me pick him, but he has to reproduce that at international level more."

The striker has claimed 11 goals this season, but has yet to get off the mark in 19 internationals. "I'd love to score, everybody would, but it's not a big worry," declared McManaman, who has dismissed talk of a rift between himself and Hoddle.

McManaman's Liverpool teammate, teen wonder kid Michael Owen, also aims to catch Hoddle's eye after an impressive debut against Chile.

And he insists nerves will not be a problem as he bids to make his mark against the Swiss. "Although I suffered from a few nerves before the Chile game, I wasn't worried and I don't see any reason why I should be overawed by things," he said.

Scotland ravaged by midfield injuries

GLASGOW (AFP) — Scotland manager Craig Brown faces a midfield crisis ahead of Wednesday's World Cup warm-up clash with fellow qualifiers Denmark.

Brown, already hit by a long injury list, suffered two more blows on Monday when Celtic stars Paul Lambert and Craig Burley withdrew from the squad.

Lambert picked up an ankle injury in the 1-0 victory at Aberdeen on Saturday, while Burley has

a hamstring strain. It means Brown joined up with his squad in Glasgow without seven of his original selections.

Skipper Gary McAllister, John Collins and David Hopkin had already been ruled out by injury, while strikers Kevin Gallacher and Gordon Durie are also missing.

But Brown has resisted the temptation to call up any players from the B team who face Wales on Tuesday. Brown said: "My reaction

to Lambert and Burley being unavailable is one of disappointment, but come the hour, come the man."

"We have players like Stuart McCall, Scott Gemmill and Billy McKinlay to call on, so it's not all gloom."

Denmark are expected to field a strong squad, including local Glasgow heroes Brian Laudrup of Rangers and Celtic pair Marc Rieper and Morten Wieghorst.

French face fines over World Cup tickets

BRUSSELS (AFP) — French World Cup organisers will almost certainly be fined for refusing to share out the remaining 110,000 tickets between the 32 tournament finalists.

A European Commission spokesman said Monday the organisation would immediately take formal proceedings, which could lead to a fine of up to 10 per cent of the total price for the 110,000 tickets.

France 98 organisers confirmed on Monday that an extra 50,000 tickets would be shared out between national federations but refused to make the remaining 110,000 tickets available only outside France.

Fans in England, Scotland, Germany, Holland and Belgium, who had made the loudest complaints about ticket allocation, will very likely be limited to less than 1,000 extra tickets a match. They have so far been able to buy only 3,000 tickets for each of their three first-round matches.

The World Cup organisers, the CFO, said the tickets would be sold to all European Union residents — including French fans who already have the lion's share of tickets.

They defended their position to allow French fans to apply for the 110,000 tickets.

"Otherwise it would discriminate against the French public," the CFO said in a statement.

The European Commission had accused the CFO of breaching the principles of free and fair competition within the EU's single market.

European Competition Commissioner Karel Van Miert said that of a total of 2.5 million tickets available for the tournament, which starts on June 10, 37 per cent were reserved for sale to French fans, 21 per cent to 176 national federations, 5.4 per cent to tour operators, 14.2 per cent to sponsors, 2.8 per cent to public collective organisations and 4.3 per cent to youth sports associations.

Jacquet hopes to avoid surprises

MOSCOW (AFP) —

France coach Aime Jacquet hopes to avoid any more unpleasant surprises when the World Cup hosts face Russia in a friendly international here on Wednesday night.

France will be without key midfielder Zinedine Zidane and striker David Trezeguet — both injured — when they play their penultimate match ahead of the World Cup kick-off in June.

Zidane was a late withdrawal. He aggravated an ankle injury playing for Juventus against Parma on Sunday and was unable to fly out of Paris with his teammates.

After failing a medical he returned to Turin to undergo treatment.

France did not call up a replacement and flew into Moscow with just 17 players, including uncapped Arsenal striker Nicolas Anelka, who was named as a replacement for

Trezeguet.

Former Paris St Germain player Anelka turned 19 earlier this month and has begun to make an impact for Arsenal after a slow start in the English Premier League.

"Anelka was among several players who deserved to have a chance before I made my definitive selection for the World Cup," said Jacquet. "He is a player for the future."

Anelka was preferred to several players with international pedigrees, including Florian Maurice and Nicolas Ouedec, while Christophe Dugarry is still not fully fit.

Goalkeeper Fabien Barthez also complained of having a muscle injury to his right leg during a training session Monday night and quit after just 20 minutes.

The French were stunned by sub-freezing temperatures on their arrival.



Juergen Klinsmann (2ndL), captain of the German national soccer team controls the ball with Michael Tarnat (L), Juergen Kohler (3dL), Jens Nowotny and Christian Woerns (R) in pursuit during a practice in Stuttgart, March 24. Germany plays a friendly soccer match against Brazil in Stuttgart (Reuters photo)

Germans set to face Brazil

STUTTGART (AFP) — Berti Vogts and his German national team will go into the record books if they can score a rare victory over world champions Brazil in a fascinating pre-World Cup friendly here on Wednesday night.

Germany have gone 22 matches without defeat (17 wins/5 draws) and are one step away from the all-time German record of 23 set between October 11, 1978, (a 4-3 win over Czechoslovakia in Prague) and January 1, 1981, (a 1-2 loss to Argentina in Montevideo) under Jupp Derwall.

Aside from statistical interest, Wednesday's game also promises to be a top-notch match-up between the European and world champions.

"For me Brazil are the favourites for the World Cup in France," Vogts said Monday. "They don't just have one player of Ronaldo's class, but 14 or 15."

German captain Jurgen Klinsmann is back after a six-month injury hiatus. He will line-up from the start, although the likes of Ulf Kirsten and Oliver Bierhoff are far ahead of him in terms of current form.

This month's public blow-up with Tottenham Hotspur coach Christian Gross did him little good in the popularity stakes, but Vogts underscored anew that Klinsmann "is and will remain our captain and will lead the side well in France."

The Stuttgart game will mark a full turn in Klinsmann's career. He won his spurs as a footballer in this city, going on to make his international debut against none other than Brazil in December, 1987. This will be his 101st cap.

The prospect of playing in front of his home crowd with the best team in the world as his opponent already has Klinsmann feeling a bit flighty.

"But it gives you confidence when you know the national trainer is behind you," the blond striker said.

"He still keeps a close eye on me, though."

I still have to perform. And I know that I am under pressure because Ulf (Kirsten) and Oliver (Bierhoff) have scored lots of goals this season."

Klinsmann says he will put extra effort into training to show he deserves his place while on the field he will rely greatly on his friend Thomas Häßler to feed him from the midfield.

Having lost Fredi Bobic to a dislocated shoulder, Vogts also scrubbed Jens Jeremies' name from his list of players on Monday.

The unconventional 1860 Munich defender, notable for his straggly hair and goatee beard, will undergo a knee operation on Tuesday.

"I wanted to see Jens against Brazil," Vogts said. "He would have played from the start."

The German media has focused, instead, on the only newcomer to Germany's 22-man squad, fellow defender Yves Egenrauch, who admits his nomination came like "a bolt from the blue."

Vogts respects Egenrauch's reputation as Schalke as an honest toiler who runs and chases and plugs gaps wherever he is required to.

"He certainly won't be in the starting line-up, but I am thinking about pinning a photo of Yves on Ronaldo's locker in the dressing room," Vogts quipped, a reference to his blanking of the Brazilian star in last week's UEFA Cup quarter final against Inter Milan.

Brazil are one of the few countries in the world against whom Germany have a negative record.

They can claim only three victories and four draws from their 15 encounters. The last time the two nations met, however, in 1993, goals by Guido Buchwald and Andy Moller gave the host nation a 2-1 victory in Cologne.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Newcastle directors resign

NEWCASTLE (AFP) — The chairman of Newcastle United Football Club, Freddy Shepherd, and vice-chairman Douglas Hall have resigned their directorships of the club, a spokesman for the pair said early Tuesday. The two men had come under mounting pressure to resign after allegations that they had made a string of disparaging comments, including mocking fans for buying overpriced club merchandise and describing local women as "dogs".

NBA giant hits the big screen

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Romania's Gheorghe Muresan, the tallest player in National Basketball Association history, makes his movie debut in a film to be released Friday called, appropriately, "My Giant." The movie, starring comedian Billy Crystal, features the injured Washington Wizards' 7-foot-7 center as Max, a caretaker living in a monastery who comes to America. "Basketball is my life. This is different," Muresan said. "I have played basketball my whole life." Muresan was named the NBA's Most Improved Player in 1996 and was the NBA's most accurate shooter the past two seasons. He has become popular here and could have an impact to a wider audience as a gentle cinematic giant. "Overnight, you never know what can happen," he said. "This is a free country. In the United States, you can do many things."

Vogts Slams FIFA decision

STUTTGART (AFP) — FIFA's efforts to protect players by banning the sliding tackle from behind and from the side were Monday slammed German coach Berti Vogts, who believes such tackles ought to remain a legitimate weapon for any defender. Vogts said the move was one made by "old men out of touch" with the realities of the game. "It would have been nice if Mr (Sepp) Blatter (FIFA general-secretary) and a few of the other guys who are over 70 had spoken beforehand with FIFA's technical commission," he said at a press conference here, where Germany are preparing for this Wednesday's friendly against Brazil. FIFA plans to introduce the new rule at this year's World Cup in France, punishing all those who employ illegal sliding tackles with a red card. Vogts himself, known as "the Terrier" in his playing days with Borussia Monchengladbach, was a renowned employer of the manoeuvre, which helped him compensate his lack of height as a defender. To prepare his men for the new ruling, Vogts has invited Germany's only World Cup referee, Bernd Heynemann, to accompany the German squad on their 10-day training camp to Finland in May.

Wolf takes over at Wolfsburg

WOLFSBURG (AFP) — Wolfgang Wolf, who has never coached at top level before, was Monday handed the task of saving struggling Bundesliga side Wolfsburg from relegation. He was given a contract until the end of the season

and has exactly seven matches in which to make his mark. His contract contains no clause for an extension. "You have to find the team's heart," said Wolf, a former player with the Stuttgart Kickers and Kaiserslautern. Wolf's predecessor, Willi Reimann, has taken up legal action after comments by club officials that he voluntarily resigned last week. Wolfsburg have dropped to 15th, just outside the relegation zone on goal difference, and have managed only two draws from their previous eight matches.

Adebola hopes are hit by injury

BELFAST (AFP) — Dele Adebola claims he is still committed to Northern Ireland, even though he will almost certainly be unfit to make his debut against Slovakia here on Wednesday. While the rest of the squad were having their first training session under new manager Lawrie McMenemy on Monday, the Birmingham striker was receiving treatment for a back spasm. McMenemy was hoping Adebola would recover sufficiently to join up with the party, but the player has virtually given up hope of being fit to face Slovakia in the friendly fixture. "I don't think I'll make it, I'm disappointed, but still keen to give Northern Ireland a go. If Lawrie picks me in his squad for the next game I'd certainly be willing," said Nigerian-born Adebola, who qualifies to play for Northern Ireland as a British passport holder. His withdrawal would take to nine the number of players unavailable for McMenemy's first match in charge, and that figure could rise further.

NBA owner

Cap Bulls' guard Michael Jordan...

center Travis Knight... R. du...

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Devers, Jones to dispute 'world's fastest woman' race in China

BEIJING (AFP) — World 100m champion Marion Jones and double Olympic champion Gail Devers are being lined up for a "world's fastest woman" race in China in May, organisers said Tuesday.

But Merlene Ottey of Jamaica, number three last year behind Jones and Devers, has rejected an invitation, the Chinese Athletics Management Centre (CAMC) backers said.

The race is to be held in a 30,000 capacity stadium in Chengdu, capital of the southwestern province of Sichuan.

"Both Jones and Devers are likely to show up but Merlene Ottey of Jamaica has turned down our invitation," CAMC vice director Shang Xiutang was quoted as saying by the official Xinhua news agency.

"It is not a matter of appearance

fees, it is because the top three are unwilling to run head-to-head in a commercial race," he said.

Already signed are Zhanna Pintsushevich of Ukraine, silver medalist from the world championships in Athens last year, bronze medalist Sevatheda Fynes of the Bahamas, and 200m Olympic silver medalist Susanthika Jayasinghe of Sri Lanka.

In addition to five foreign sprinters, three Chinese will run including Li Xuemei, who clocked the second-fastest 100m of 1997 with a surprise 10.79 in last year's Chinese National Games.

"I am confident to face the world's best. I fear nobody," Li told Xinhua. The event is similar to a 150m showdown last June between the 100m Olympic champion Donovan Bailey of Canada and American

Michael Johnson, the gold medalist in the 200 and 400 meters.

But Shang said the appearance fees and prize money are "far less." He said Jones and Devers were scheduled to sign contracts on Tuesday.

The report quoted other "reliable sources" as saying Jones had asked a \$40,000 fee to run, compared to 25,000 for Pintsushevich and 15,000 for Jayasinghe.

According to previous Chinese reports, former U.S. Olympic champion Florence Griffith-Joyner will also be on hand as a non-participant.

The Bailey-Johnson "world's fastest man" showdown in Toronto ended up a bust, with Johnson stopping running because of a pulled leg muscle halfway through the race.

Sampras, Seles eliminated

KEY BISCAINE (AFP)

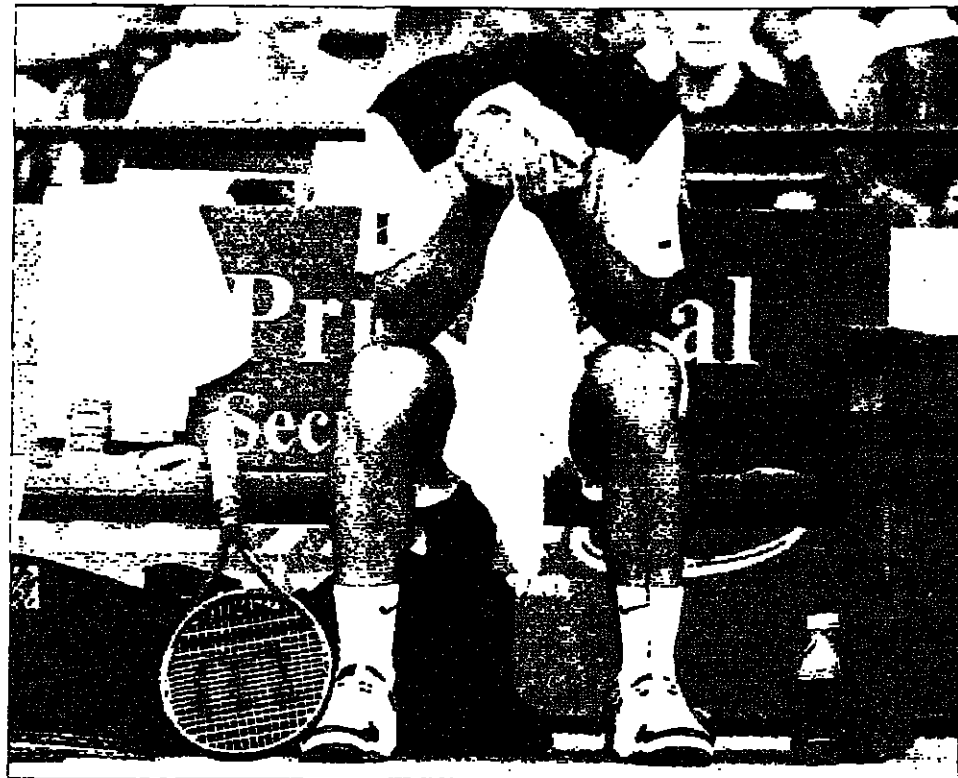
— World No.1 Pete Sampras was ousted by South Africa's Wayne Ferreira 0-6, 7-6 (8/6), 6-3, here Monday at the \$4.6 million Lipton Championships.

Former top-10 player Ferreira saved two match points in the second-set tie-breaker before toppling Sampras in the third round of the \$4.6 million ATP and WTA event.

Sampras, who has now lost four times in 19 matches this year, was not happy about his overpowering start.

"I did not really like winning 6-0. It was strange," Sampras said. "That always makes for a tougher opponent."

Now the U.S. star could be dethroned from his 102-week perch atop the men's tennis world by No. 2-ranked Czech player Petr Korda, third-ranked Marcelo Rios or Britain's Greg



No.1 ranked Pete Sampras of the United States buries his face in a towel after losing the fifth game of the third set against 32nd seed Wayne Ferreira from the Republic of South Africa in their third round match at the Lipton Championships. Sampras was upset by Ferreira 0-6 7-6 6-3 (Reuters photo)

Rusedski, ranked fifth.

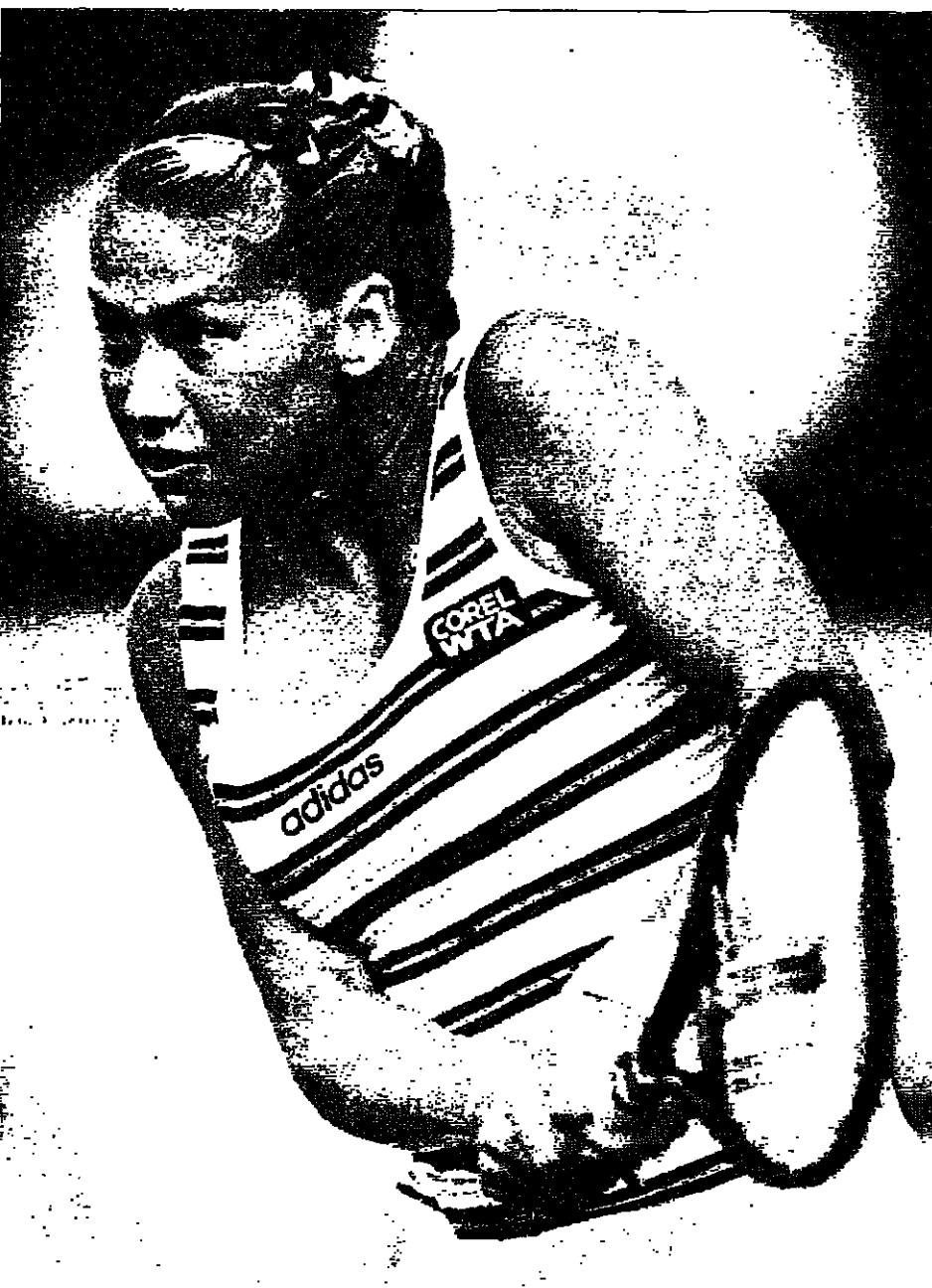
In women's play, World No. 5 Monica Seles was ousted and American Serena Williams, the head-dressed sister of teen star Venus Williams, has a quarter-final date with World No.1 Martina Hingis.

Russia's Anna Kournikova beat Seles 7-5, 6-4, to reach a fourth-round match against Spain's Conchita Martinez for the right to face second seed Lindsay Davenport of the United States, who beat France's Nathalie Tauziat 6-2, 6-1.

Williams beat Switzerland's Patty Schnyder 6-0, 4-6, 6-3, but faces a tougher Swiss foe for a semi-final slot in Hingis, who beat France's Sandrine Testud 6-3, 5-7, 6-2.

Venus advanced to the quarter-finals as well, beating Italy's Rita Grande 6-1, 6-4. She will next face South Africa's Amanda Coetzer, the sixth seed, who beat Italy's Silvia Farina 6-7 (3/7), 6-2, 6-1.

Third-seed Jana Novotna of the Czech Republic downed Anke Huber of Germany 6-2, 6-2 in 57 minutes and will next face eighth-seeded Spaniard Arantxa Sanchez Vicario, who beat Venezuela's Maria Vento 6-2, 6-1.



Russian Anna Kournikova returns a serve against Monica Seles in the first set of their fourth round match at The Lipton Championships March 23. Seles was upset by Kournikova 7-5 6-4 (Reuters photo)

McRae opens up after Makinen crashes out

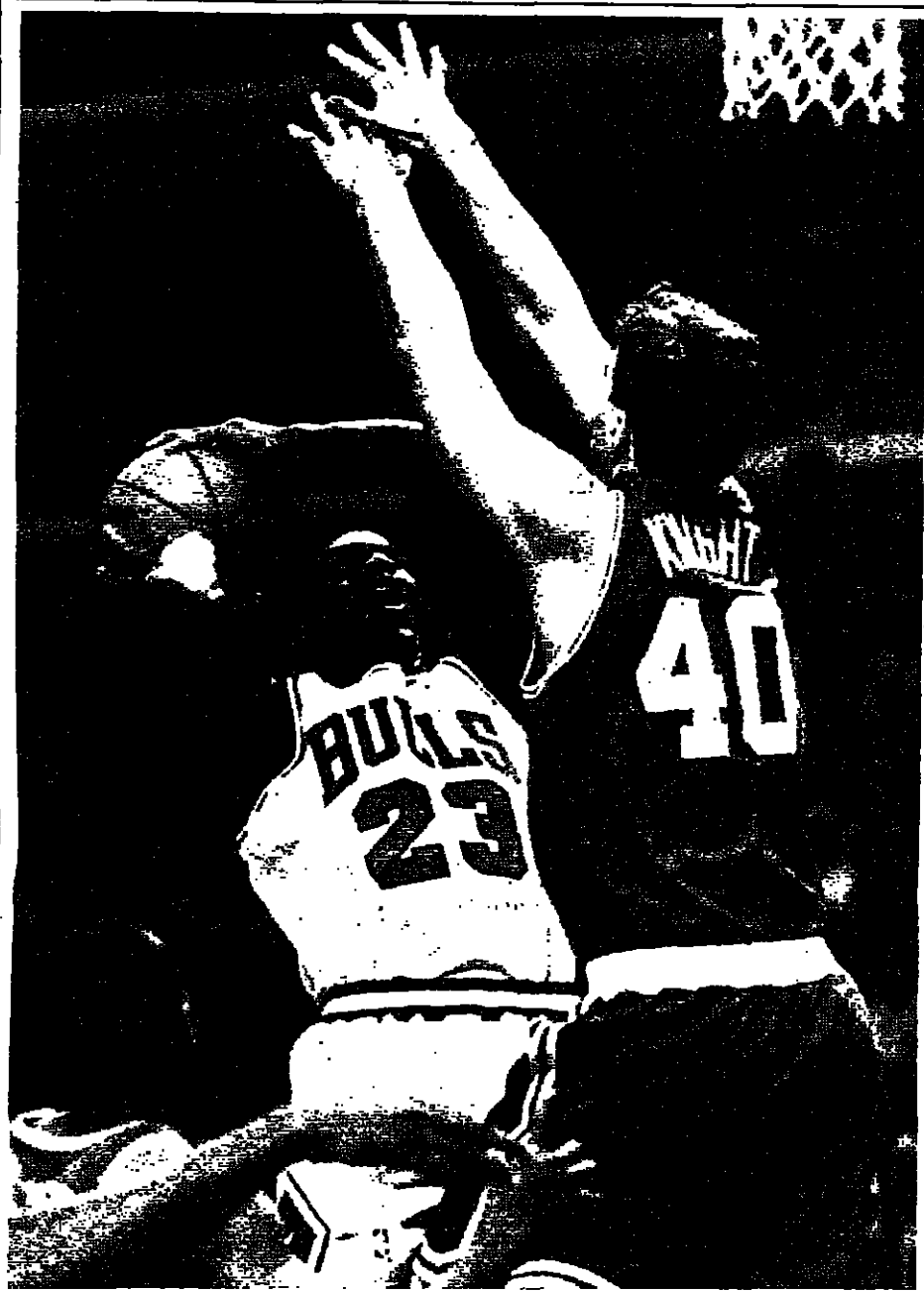
MATOSINHOS, Portugal (AFP) — Colin McRae was firmly in command of the Rally of Portugal on Tuesday after reigning world champion Tommi Makinen of Finland crashed out when he hit a tree after going off the road.

The Mitsubishi Lancer driver had been attempting to make inroads into McRae's big lead when he went off on the day's second special stage.

The Scot, who has yet to register a win in the first three rounds of the championship, retiring twice with mechanical problems, was 56sec ahead of his nearest chaser, Juhan Kankkunen of Finland, after setting the scratch time in the second special.

Safari Rally winner Richard Burns of England jumped from sixth to third after posting the fastest time in the day's third special while former world champion Carlos Sainz of Spain dropped to fifth.

There were another seven specials in Tuesday's second leg. The rally finished Wednesday.



Chicago Bulls' guard Michael Jordan (L) manages to get a shot off over Boston Celtics' center Travis Knight (R) during the first quarter of their NBA game, in Chicago. The Bulls won 111-88 (Reuters photo)

NBA owners wipe out labour deal

DALLAS (AFP) — National Basketball Association owners voted 27-2 here Monday to reopen their union agreement, a move that could lead to a labour shutdown following the current season.

The vote voids the remaining three years of a six-year collective bargaining agreement and sets the stage for a labor showdown with more militant leadership than when the existing deal was struck in 1995.

Owners claim a majority of NBA clubs, at least 15 of 29, will lose money under the current deal.

"We're pretty certain at least 15 teams will lose money in 1997-98," NBA deputy commissioner Russ Granik said. "Obviously that's not a healthy situation long term."

The NBA is the only major North American sports league never to lose a game to a labor fight, but if no new deal is set when this one ends June 30, a lockout by owners is likely.

"What we're seeing now is a system where salaries begin to rise, teams become unprofitable and ticket prices continue to rise," NBA commissioner David Stern said. "We're close to a system that works, but we didn't quite hit it. We need a better system. We should be able to find one."

New television contracts will bring each NBA club \$23 million a year, on average, over the next four seasons.

Owners have spent themselves into unprofitability by undercutting the NBA's salary cap. The limits allow clubs to re-sign their own free agents without counting against the

cap, allowing several players

Stern said players will not have to take less, but their percentage of total basketball income must fall to ensure profitability.

"We're not saying players will take a pay cut," he said. "With new revenues coming into the league, the amount paid to players will continue to increase. The overall concept is to look for a better mechanism."

Players have argued the owners need to control themselves and not enter into spending sprees and bidding wars for top talent.

Owners were only allowed to void the deal if players received more than 51.8 percent of total revenues in salaries. This year, Granik said, the NBA is paying out 57.2 per cent of its income in salaries.

Put into dollar terms, \$995 million of the NBA's \$1.738 billion income is going to salaries, 95 million more than owners need to reopen and 160 million more than the minimum guaranteed to players.

"What the owners have decided is this economic situation is not a workable one for the owners," Granik said. "Our goal is to reach a fair deal. Our hope is if the players come to the table with the same mindset, we can get it done by June 30."

The NBA came close to a work stoppage in 1995 when free agent signings were delayed and summer camps were postponed, but no games were missed.

But players were unhappy with the union deal that came out of those talks and voted out the union leaders who made it, putting in Patrick Ewing as the new leader.

Ewing and Michael Jordan were among the players who fought against the deal, saying it would limit salaries too much for top players.

One system that will be studied is American football's salary cap, which has no loopholes and has created elite top-salary players and a middle class at low levels, with veterans often forced to take lower wages once they are not among the best at their jobs.

"That's one model that seems to be working pretty well," Granik said.

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NBA

Detroit	94	Philadelphia	79
Chicago	111	Boston	88

Dallas	91	Minnesota	87
LA Lakers	107	Denver	86
Seattle	109	Sacramento	83
Vancouver	106	LA Clippers	95

NHL

Detroit	5	Chicago	5 (OT)
Carolina	5	Florida	3

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- * Fluent in English and Arabic
- * High self-esteem and self-motivated

Secretary with the following qualification

- * Computer literate
- * Fluent in English and Arabic (speaking & typing)
- * Familiar with office duties and chores

Interested candidates should call 551 - 3590 between 9:30 - 11:00 am for an interview appointment. All applications will be kept in strict confidence.

Arafat calls for Arab summit, protection for Palestinians

CAIRO (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat called on Tuesday for an urgent Arab summit to demand Israeli implementation of U.N. resolutions and appealed for international protection for his people.

The secretary general of the Arab League, Esmat Abdul Meguid, urged Arab countries to take tougher measures against Israel and to freeze U.N. sanctions imposed on Libya for the Lockerbie bombing.

Mr. Arafat and Mr. Abdul Meguid were speaking to foreign ministers of the 22-member Arab League which began a two-day meeting here Tuesday largely devoted to the Arab-Israeli peace process and Libya's dispute with the West.

The meeting is expected to issue a call to freeze normalisation of ties with Israel and an end to U.N. sanctions on Libya, officials have said.

"The peace process is going through a dangerous phase and is about to take its last breath," President Arafat said in a passionate appeal.

"I renew my invitation for the convening of an urgent Arab summit to review the Arab situation and demand implementation of international resolutions on the Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese tracks," Mr. Arafat said.

"If a broad Arab summit cannot be convened, I suggest that

a mini-summit be held because supreme Arab national interest demands that a meeting be held as soon as possible," Mr. Arafat said.

He urged the international community to protect the Palestinian people against "repeated attacks by [Jewish] settlers and the [Israeli] occupation army."

"I put the question of the security of the Palestinian people to the international community and the [U.N.] Security Council," the Palestinian president said.

Mr. Abdul Meguid told the meeting that "the only way of saving the peace process from the catastrophe threatening it is to take more severe measures against Israel."

He also urged the ministers to freeze sanctions imposed by the U.N. Security Council on Libya until the International Court of Justice in The Hague rules whether Tripoli is responsible for the 1988 bombing of a plane over Lockerbie, Scotland, killing 270 people.

The International Court of Justice ruled last month that it had jurisdiction to hear Tripoli's lawsuit claiming the right to refuse to extradite two Libyan suspects to Britain or the United States over the bombing.

Mr. Arafat also urged the United States and Russia, as co-sponsors of the Middle East peace process, China, Japan and the European Union to join

rankings with Arab countries and put pressure on Israel to respect its peace agreements.

"The peace process will not live much longer without such action and our people will no longer accept the international double standards," Mr. Arafat warned.

He said the latest U.S. stand-off with Iraq over U.N. arms inspections "opened old wounds and made us think why international legislation is compulsory for Arabs and not compulsory for Israel."

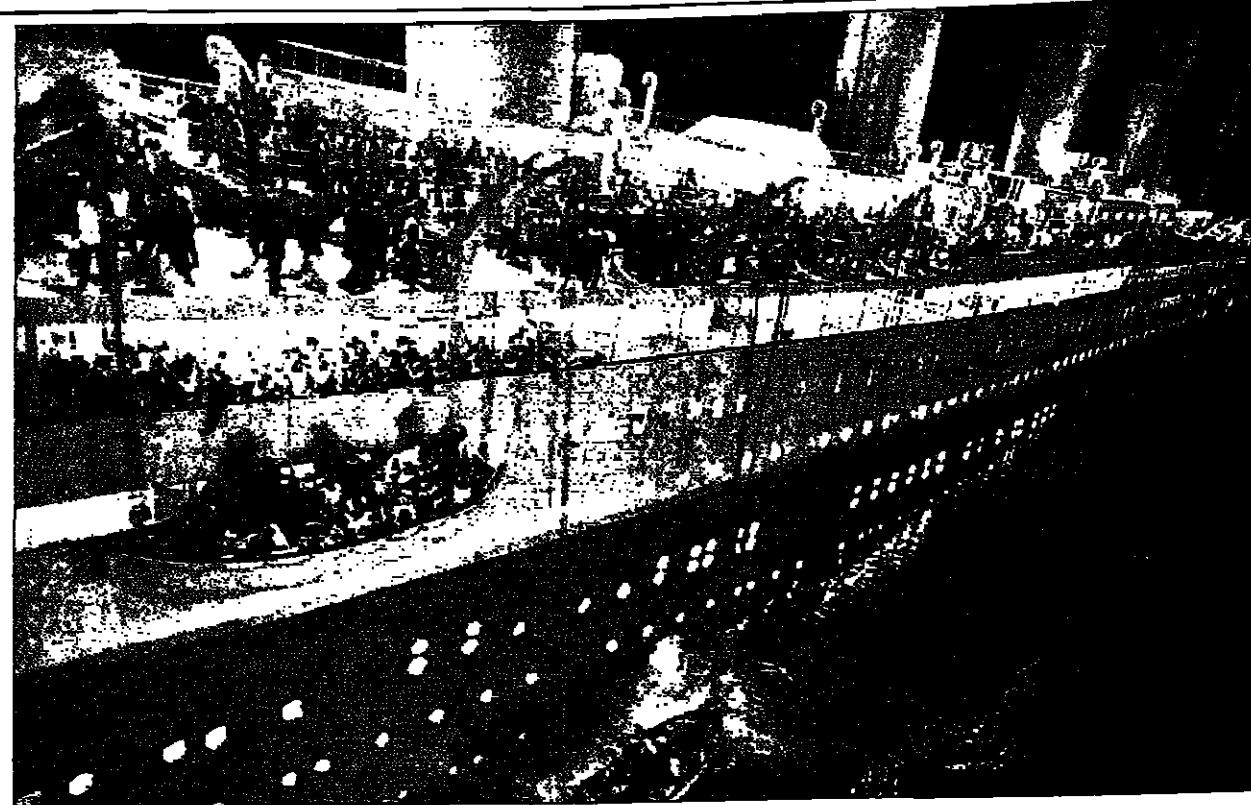
The peace process ground to a halt a year ago after Israel began building a Jewish settlement project in Arab east Jerusalem.

In March 1997, Arab foreign ministers decided to freeze all normalisation steps with Israel, accusing it of blocking progress in the peace process.

Mr. Abdul Meguid said on Tuesday that the Arabs should revise these policies and strengthen them against Israel.

Sixteen foreign ministers are taking part in the session chaired by Sudanese Foreign Minister Mustafa Osman Ismail, but Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Qatar and Somalia are not represented at ministerial level.

Tuesday's session was officially opened by Abdulrahman Al Mansuri, a deputy to the Saudi foreign minister, Prince Saud Al Faisal, who chaired the last ministerial meeting in September.



TITANIC IN TIE WITH BEN HUR: A scene from the movie 'Titanic' which was nominated for a record-tying 14 Academy Awards. 'Titanic' won 11 Oscars, including Best Picture, Best Director and tied the 1959 movie 'Ben Hur' for winning the most Oscars of any movie (AFP photo)

Diplomats arrive in Baghdad for inspections of Iraq's sensitive sites

BAGHDAD (AFP) — A group of diplomats arrived Tuesday to accompany U.N. arms experts on the first inspections of presidential sites, as U.N. weapons chief Richard Butler held a final round of talks with the Iraqi leadership.

The 19 diplomats are part of a Special Group set up to inspect eight Iraqi presidential sites, under the terms of a Feb. 23 accord between U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan and Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz.

The accord defused a crisis over arms inspections in which the United States and Britain threatened Iraq with military force.

The diplomats are to accompany experts of the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) which have been in charge of eliminating Iraq's weapons of mass destruction since the 1991 Gulf war.

The head of the special group, Sri Lankan arms control expert Jayantha Dhanapala, has been in Baghdad since Sunday and said he expected the first inspections of presidential sites to take place "very soon."

Mr. Dhanapala chose 20 diplomats of different nationalities for the special group, with their presence at the inspections designed to address Iraqi concerns over its sovereignty.

A Japanese diplomat dropped out for family reasons and he is to be replaced. Among the others are Ryan Crocker of the United States, Britain's

U.N. in contact with Iraq over jailed germ warfare scientist

BAGHDAD (AFP) — The U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) for Iraq's disarmament has contacted Baghdad over the arrest of a scientist seen as the architect of its germ warfare programme, the UNSCOM chief said here Wednesday.

"There has been a correspondence between Iraq and UNSCOM on this matter in the last few days," Richard Butler told AFP in an interview after two days of talks with the Iraqi leadership.

"But I will not discuss it. It's between them and us," the UNSCOM chairman said. "It's an important matter on which they are communicating with us, and I will respect the privacy of it."

The New York Times, quoting Iraqi and Western officials, reported on Tuesday that Nasser Hindawi was arrested as he prepared to flee Iraq. He was an "architect of Iraq's ambitious programme to make germ weapons, and Western officials have long hoped they could interview him in the absence of Iraqi secret police officers," who sit in on UNSCOM interviews, it said.

Mr. Hindawi's arrest "deals a significant blow to the U.N. inspectors who have spent much of the last seven years trying to determine the scale and killing power of Iraq's germ arsenal," it added.

The paper quoted Iraq's U.N. ambassador, Nizar Hamdoun, as saying Monday that Mr. Hindawi remained in prison, and that his government informed the United Nations of the arrest in early March.

The ambassador said Mr. Hindawi had been found in possession of documents related to Iraq's biological programme that he was supposed to have turned over to the government, the report added.

Simon Collis and Marcel Laugel of France. Mr. Dhanapala said Monday he would stay in Iraq for the "base line visits of the eight presidential sites. I think it should be accomplished in two weeks."

The first visits will allow inspectors "to get a sense of what is there, what is the nature, extent and purpose to which those buildings are put," according to Mr. Butler.

The UNSCOM chairman, who also arrived Sunday on his first visit since the crisis over access to the sites, held a final round of talks with Mr. Aziz on Tuesday, the official news agency INA said.

U.N. special envoy Prakash Shah, meanwhile, said his job was to ensure both sides stuck to their commitments on the inspections.

Mr. Shah said he had a responsibility to make sure both Iraq and U.N. inspectors "perform to the level that they have promised under the agreement" on arms inspections reached by Mr. Annan.

"There is a role in ensuring... that the agreement between the secretary general and the Iraqi authorities is fulfilled," he told AFP in an interview.

"There are certain responsibilities placed upon us by the resolutions of the Security Council. There are also certain obligations placed on us by the traditional principles of the United Nations."

Mr. Shah denied that his arrival in Baghdad in the new post of troubleshooter for all U.N. activities in Iraq had created any friction with UNSCOM.

"I'm... the seniormost U.N. official in Baghdad and have the secretary general's support in dealing with all of the United Nations' activities in Baghdad," he said.

"It is not that I will be trying to undercut Butler... We are both working for the United Nations."

The special envoy, who met Mr. Aziz on Monday, said the Iraqi official had assured him that Baghdad would cooperate with the inspections.

"He was quite categorical that Iraq has every intention of keeping the agreement that they have signed with the secretary general," he said.

Mr. Shah said Mr. Aziz had welcomed his arrival as Mr. Annan's envoy and "extended all cooperation and support for the job that has been assigned to me by the secretary general" to head off any fresh crisis.

German opposition leader criticises Israel's settlements

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Gerhard Schroeder, head of Germany's opposition Social Democratic Party, criticised Israel's Jewish settlement policy after meeting here Tuesday with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"It cannot be denied that Jewish building [in Palestinian areas] affects the general atmosphere and the peace process," Mr. Schroeder said during a press conference in Jerusalem.

Mr. Schroeder, who will challenge Chancellor Helmut Kohl in September elections, also met with Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai on the second day of a three-day

visit to Israel and the Palestinian territories.

The German politician said he would stress in a meeting later Tuesday with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat the importance of "restoring [Israeli] confidence in the peace process by battling terrorism."

Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts have been deadlocked for the past year, due in part to Israeli settlement building in disputed areas and to attacks on Israelis by Palestinian opposition activists.

Mr. Schroeder, who is prime minister of the Lower Saxony region and speaker of the Bundesrat, the upper chamber of par-

liament, also visited Tuesday the Yad Vashem memorial to the six million Jews killed by Nazis during the Holocaust.

Israel was the first foreign visit by Mr. Schroeder since becoming speaker of the Bundesrat and he said he chose his destination "to show that the younger generation of German politicians is very concerned to maintain the special links uniting our country to Israel."

Mr. Schroeder also met with visiting U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, who on Tuesday began the first official visit to Israel by a head of the world body.

Palestinian reporters complain to Annan on Israeli harassment

GAZA (R) — Palestinian journalists complained in a letter to U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan on Monday that Israeli troops were harassing them and preventing them from doing their work.

The Palestinian Journalists Syndicate said in a letter to Mr. Annan that Israeli soldiers regularly shot at them, arrested them and confiscated their cameras and film.

Israeli officials denied soldiers targeted Palestinian journalists.

The group said Israeli authorities deny government press cards to Palestinian journalists and prevent them from travelling freely between Gaza and the West Bank.

"We need your urgent

intervention to stop the suffering of... journalists who work in very dangerous and severe circumstances," it said.

Israeli troops wounded nine Palestinian journalists with rubber-coated bullets, including two working for Reuters, during a riot in Hebron earlier this month.

The journalists said they clearly identified themselves as members of the media but the Israeli army said soldiers confused them with Palestinian stone-throwers.

The spokesman for Israel's coordinator of activities in the West Bank and Gaza said in response to the complaints on Monday that both Israeli and Palestinian journalists had been wounded covering clashes in the West

Bank and Gaza Strip.

"Journalists are on the front line and Israeli soldiers can't always distinguish between them and the stone-throwers," said spokesman Shlomo Dror.

"I doubt we arrest journalists the way they present it or confiscate film. Sometimes journalists' equipment is damaged during incidents but nothing is done deliberately and we investigate every individual case," he told Reuters.

Mr. Dror said authorities had given press cards to 450 Palestinian journalists and allowed them to travel freely in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza. Some journalists had been denied press cards because of Israeli security concerns, he said.

WASHINGTON (AFP) — As many as 45 U.S. warplanes and 1,200 airmen begin deploying to Bahrain this week in the first major rotation of U.S. air forces in the Gulf since the U.S. build-up against Iraq began last year, air force officials said Monday.

The force, which includes at least 39 fighters and bombers, will replace a similar sized force that has been stationed in Bahrain since November, the officials said.

The first of the main body of airmen were scheduled to depart Monday evening for Southwest Asia from Mountain Home Air Force Base in Idaho, home of the 366th Air Expeditionary Wing, they said.

"This is just a routine rotation," said Air Force Lieutenant Steven Rolenc, a spokesman for the base. "It's the 366th turn to go over there and do that mission."

Going to Bahrain, air force sources said, were 12 F-15C fighters, 12 F-15E fighter bombers, 12 F-16CJ fighters, three B-1 bombers, and four KC-135 air refuelling aircraft. Air force sources said the deployment was scheduled to be completed by March 27.

They will replace a force of two dozen F-16s, 12 F-15Cs, three B-1 bombers and four KC-135 tanker planes from the 347th Air Expeditionary Wing, which was

deployed to Bahrain in November. The main difference is that this time the force will include F-15Es, the only fighter capable of dropping 5,000 pound bunker busting bombs.

The air force also has sent in fresh pilots and ground crews to Kuwait to man the six F-117 Stealth fighters stationed there. About 200 airmen were involved in that deployment from Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico.

The U.S. Navy also has been rotating its warships in the Gulf, recently replacing the aircraft carrier USS George Washington with the USS Stennis.

U.S. planes head to Bahrain in rotation of forces in Gulf

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Despite a number of development projects in Jabaliya launched after the start of self-rule in 1995, most streets remain unpaved and are lined by ramshackle concrete houses where an average seven people live per household.

Annan faces desperation of Palestinian refugees in Gaza

JABALIYA REFUGEE CAMP (AFP) — U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan came face to face with the desperation of Palestinian refugees on Tuesday when he was mobbed in a visit to this teeming camp in Gaza.

Mr. Annan, accompanied by Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's wife, Suha, was buffeted by hundreds of people pressing in on his entourage as they visited a boys school in Jabaliya, the dusty and rundown home to 84,000 Palestinian refugees.

"You have to help us, the U.N. must help Jabaliya camp and all the refugees," shouted an old

man who fought through a cordon of security agents to reach the United Nations chief.

Another woman battled unsuccessfully with security officers to reach the U.N. chief, shouting "Why doesn't he visit our homes?"

"I live with five children in a house where the rain leaks in," the woman, Halima Ward, 44, told AFP afterwards. "Why doesn't he come see how we live?"

After pushing through to talk to some of the children and view a classroom, Mr. Annan cut short his visit to the school, cancelling a planned visit to a

refugee home and a U.N.-run clinic.

"I enjoyed the visit to Jabaliya. With all the pushing and shoving," Mr. Annan told journalists as he left the Gaza Strip through the Erez crossing into Israel, the next stop in his Middle East tour.

Residents of Jabaliya, the largest of Gaza's eight camps, pleaded for greater U.N. aid to face an economic situation which has only deteriorated since the start of the peace process with Israel in 1994.

Many said they feared the U.N. Work and Relief Agency (UNWRA), which faces a

chronic budget crunch, would cut education and medical services on which they rely.

"If UNWRA starts cutting back on it, it will be a disaster," said Mohammed Karama, 37, who owns a shop in the camp.

He said Jabaliya residents "felt nothing from the peace process" which has ground to a year-long deadlock even before reaching final status negotiations which are to determine the fate of Palestinian refugees.

"The world has forgotten about refugees. They can't even move on the simplest issues in the peace process, so what will they do with us?" he said.

Over half the population of the Gaza Strip is made up of refugees who lost their homes in 1948. A total of three million refugees live in camps in the territories, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, most under the care of UNWRA.

In the Gaza Strip as a whole, unemployment reached 37 per cent last year and average income has gone down at least 25 per cent over the past four years, worsened by repeated Israeli closures of the territory, U.N. officials said.

Those numbers are even higher in the refugee camps, U.N. officials said.

Despite a number of development projects in Jabaliya launched after the start of self-rule in 1995, most streets remain unpaved and are lined by ramshackle concrete houses where an average seven people live per household.

Last year UNWRA sparked angry street protests in camps throughout the region when it announced it would charge minimal fees for students to attend its schools and for medicines and some medical services.

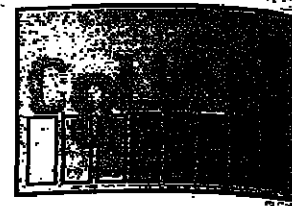
The agency backed off the move after receiving \$21 million in emergency cash. But agency officials have warned

that some services may have to be cut completely in the future if regular funding is not found.

Mr. Annan, in a speech to Palestinian legislators on Monday, called on U.N. members to help support UNWRA.

"UNWRA is simply too important to the future of this region for it to be neglected. It must be restored to its full strength over time," Mr. Annan said.

"In my meetings with leaders from all parts of the world I have very strongly urged them to provide UNWRA with the means to complete its mission," Mr. Annan said.



Lucas congratulates Cameron with drawing

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — George Lucas, whose 1977 film "Star Wars" held the record for North American box-office take until the blockbuster "Titanic" grabbed that honour, congratulated "Titanic" director James Cameron with a full-page drawing published in Daily Variety.

The drawing by "Star Wars" artistic director Iain McCaig, shows the characters in Lucas' trilogy aboard a sinking Titanic.

"I'm sure this is all your fault," computer C3PO tells his companion R2D2. Director Steven Spielberg did the same thing for Lucas when "Star Wars" overtook Spielberg's "Jaws" at the box office.

"And I did it for him when 'E.T.' beat out 'Star Wars II.' And now 'Titanic' is the new champion. It's all in the family," Lucas said.

Sect awaits God's flying saucers in Texas

GARLAND (R) — Hong-Ming Chen gazes into his heavy, diamond-encrusted gold ring and sees God descending to Earth to save hundreds of millions of people from nuclear holocaust by whisking them away in flying saucers.

Teacher Chen, as his followers call him, espouses elaborate theories of human evolution and extraterrestrial beings. But his basic message is simpler: Earth has been corrupted by evil and will suffer a nuclear war that will leave it uninhabitable. The good

news, according to Chen, is that God will land in Garland on March 31 to prepare all people and animals to escape Earth in his flying saucers in September 1999. They will travel to the Kingdom of God, which is on a planet in another galaxy.

Excuse me, sir. Uh-oh...

NEW YORK (R) — A New York motorist angry at being cut off used a phony police badge to stop the other car, only to discover the other driver was a real police officer, authorities said. The genuine officer, a detective with the New York City Police Department, arrested the fake officer on a misdemeanor charge of criminal impersonation, police said.

Douglas Yee, a 23-year-old cook, apparently got angry when another car cut him off. Yee flagged the second car over to the side of the road, where he flashed the phony badge, police said.

When the genuine detective flashed his real badge, Yee was "very surprised," they added.

Polish Lot airline scraps flight, two of crew drunk

WARSAW (R) — Poland's national airline Lot said it had to cancel a flight from Spain to Warsaw because the chief stewardess and a mechanic had been drinking. The Lot press office said in a statement that the captain of the flight became suspicious of two crew members, delayed his take-off and ordered blood tests. "After blood tests by medical services in Spain it emerged that the chief stewardess and the ground mechanic were under the influence of alcohol," the statement said. "However, no traces of alcohol were found in the rest of the crew, including the two pilots," it added. It said the stewardess and mechanic would be sacked.

Inspections of Iraq

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